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HERMENEUTICA SACRA

Principles of Old Testament Interpretation
Short Title
in Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Orthodoxy

HERMENEUTICA SACRA

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Biblical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Kenneth Knute Miller

June 1962

3180

Approved by:

Robert R. Sauer
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Reader

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This investigation has been motivated by two factors. The first is a disappointment on the part of the writer with present-day Old Testament study. The modern critical investigation of the Old Testament has, to be sure, made a great many important discoveries and has contributed much to the understanding of the Old Testament. Archaeological studies have substantiated the historicity of portions of the Old Testament and filled in gaps in our knowledge of its historical setting. Comparative religion has discovered that Israel was not alone in possessing many institutions. Sociological study has revealed much about ancient Semitic ways of thinking. Literary analysis has classified the kinds of writing employed in the Old Testament.¹ All these contributions are valuable. Yet there is a definite impression that Old Testament study is not vitally related to Christian faith and life. Such an impression is not peculiar to this writer, but has been received also by many others. Karl Barth has called for a new look at the Scripture, saying that we must see the Christ everywhere, and that the Old Testament saints looked

¹Herbert F. Hahn, Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), pp. 1ff. provides a good introduction to the contributions and weaknesses of the various schools of Old Testament study.

forward to a consummation.² Wilhelm Visscher has also felt the lack of relevance of most Old Testament study and set about to demonstrate the witness of the ancient Scriptures to Christ.³ Even contemporary orthodox Lutheranism finds it necessary to speak of a "problem" of the Old Testament. The feeling among many scholars today is that if the Old Testament is nothing more than history or literature, then there is no need to retain it.

The other factor was the writer's discovery that the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century displayed many valuable insights into the doctrine of Scripture and into theological prolegomena. They have been accused of being literalistic Biblicists,⁴ but a reading of their statements on Scripture showed that this was not quite true to fact. Similarly, they have been said to consider Scripture a book of proof-texts to support doctrine, and to have read New Testament doctrine back into the Old Testament without taking the historical circumstances of the latter into account.⁴ This charge became suspect on two counts. First, if their position on Scripture has been caricatured, perhaps their position on the interpretation of Scripture has also been inaccurately described. Second, the New Testament itself appears

² Emil G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (New York: Harper and Bros., 1955), pp. 168f.

³ Ibid., pp. 219ff.

⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

to view the Old as substantially in agreement with its own teachings.

It therefore became apparent that it would be worthwhile to investigate the hermeneutical principles of the seventeenth-century Lutherans, and to discover what principles they employed in their commentaries and dogmatics. The aim of this investigation, then, is to discover these principles and to evaluate their validity. The questions that naturally arise are such as these: Are the methods of the Old Lutherans consistent? Are they still valid today? Is the Bible used as little more than a source of proof-texts? Did the dogmatists of that period go too far in seeing Christian doctrines in the Old Testament? Did they make any significant contributions that have been overlooked? It is the aim of this study to attempt to answer these questions.

The volume of literature available from the hands of the writers of the seventeenth century has imposed certain limitations on the scope of this investigation. To be completely thorough it would be necessary to study every text on hermeneutics and every commentary from the time of Luther to well into the eighteenth century. But lack of time has obviated such an investigation. Complete thoroughness would also call for a survey of the tools of the interpreter available in the period in question. Lexicons, grammars, concordances, and study of the versions played a large part in the exegesis of Biblical texts. But such a survey is beyond the scope of

this study, as is also a survey of the general rules of interpretation, such as those dealing with context, etymology and usage, figures of speech, and parables. Such rules make up the bulk of the hermeneutics of the seventeenth century, and they are a worthy object of study. Our attention, however, is directed toward principles rather than rules.

During the sixteenth century many commentaries and some studies of the principles of interpretation were written, but few of them were detailed enough to command our attention. It was at the time of John Gerhard, about the beginning of the seventeenth century, that the methodology of Scripture interpretation received some serious attention. Within a half-century nearly everything had been said that was going to be said on the subject of hermeneutics by the Lutheran dogmaticians. It is this formative period that should receive our attention. Gerhard straddles, as it were, two eras: the end of the Reformation era and the beginning of the era of codification of doctrine. Hence Gerhard will receive our chief attention. A further reason for centering our chief attention on Gerhard is the fact that he is generally acknowledged as an outstanding representative of Lutheran orthodoxy. But it is necessary to study another individual to represent a terminus ad quem: Abraham Calov. He wrote in the latter half of the same century, at the time when the subject of hermeneutics had been very fully discussed and codified. And he is quite generally recognized as one of the

most scholastic of the Lutherans of that age. If we find that both Gerhard and Calov are in general agreement on the essentials of the interpretation of Scripture, then we may be fairly certain that the views of Lutheran orthodoxy are being represented.

The procedure followed in this study is that of description, illustration, and evaluation. The principles of interpretation are set forth as they are stated in the writings of the Lutheran dogmaticians. Then examples of the application of these principles follow, so that the discussion does not remain merely in the realm of theory, and so that it may be shown how the principles worked themselves out in practice in the commentaries. Such a procedure will enable us to evaluate the validity of the principles.

A note concerning terminology may be in place here. In order to avoid repetition it has seemed advisable to use the terms "hermeneutics," "interpretation," "exegesis," and "exposition" almost interchangeably. The specific meaning of each term as distinguished from the others is only occasionally intended, and in those places where it is intended the context makes clear what meaning the term carries. There is another group of terms that are used interchangeably for the same reason. This group includes "the Lutherans," "the orthodox Lutherans," "Lutheran orthodoxy," and "the seventeenth-century Lutherans." Again, the distinctive meaning of any of these terms is not to be pressed unless the context demands it.

There has heretofore been little investigation of this area of study, and for this reason only a few secondary sources are referred to in this study. The reader is referred, however, to Haegglund's investigation of John Gerhard's doctrine of Scripture,⁵ which has served as a very useful source of reference.

The sources employed in this investigation are mainly the commentaries and hermeneutical writings of Gerhard and Calov. There are occasional additions from other writers of the approximate period under investigation. These are limited, however, to exceptionally well-stated ideas. Of such a nature are the appendices at the end of this study.

The investigation is organized under five main headings. The first of these is a historical introduction, in which the development of the study of hermeneutics is traced up to the time when it became fully codified by the Lutherans. This development indicates a shift of emphasis from the attitude of the interpreter to the methodology he must employ, and it indicates the reasons for this shift. The second heading deals with the regula fidei, or consensus of Scripture teaching taken from the clear passages of Scripture. The idea of the regula fidei, as might be expected, is a natural expression of the doctrine of the perspicuity of

⁵Bengt Haegglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung ueber das altlutherische Schriftverstaendnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1951), pp. 1ff.

Scripture. It was also believed that there is only one sense of Scripture, and that was the sense intended by the Holy Spirit. The use of clear passages is limited by the infirmities of human reason and the sublimity of the subject-matter. The third heading includes three other aids used in interpretation by the orthodox Lutherans. One is the distinction between Law and Gospel, a distinction that was of great importance in the theology of Luther. Another is the use of summary rules codified by dogmatics. Passages should be kept in the proper frame of reference to avoid contradiction with other passages. The third aid is the use of valid deductions from passages. The Lutherans maintained that not everything need be explicitly expressed in the Bible, but that implications and inferences of a passage are also intended by the passage. The fourth major heading is concerned with the principles of Messianic prophecy. The general principle is that the New Testament is a fuller revelation, but the Old Testament is not devoid of a doctrine of Christ. The Bible knows of Messianic prophecy which, the Lutherans maintained, can refer to nothing else than Christ and His benefits. There is also typology. Scripture sometimes speaks of one thing and at the same time has reference to the New Testament fulfillment. This is especially true of the Old Testament sacrificial system. The final major heading treats, after the manner of case studies, three doctrines which the Lutherans claimed were taught in the Old

Testament: the Trinity, the Messiah, and the soul of man and its final fate. The treatment is a representation of the treatment applied by the Lutherans to the Old Testament passages, so that the reader may judge for himself the validity of their approach.

Quotations from the works cited are usually summarized or paraphrased, except where it is necessary to translate exactly. In many places, however, none of these three methods of representation is completely adequate. There the quotations are furnished in the original in footnotes.

Nearly all the works cited are given according to the short title only. This is done to conserve space, since many of the titles are so long as to be unwieldy. The complete titles are supplied in the bibliography.

All emphases in the footnotes are my own.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HERMENEUTICS

The problem of the interpretation of Scripture is not a new one. It goes back to before the time of Christ. The first codification of hermeneutical rules appears to be that of Rabbi Hillel (circa 75 B. C. to 10 A. D.),¹ where four main categories are mentioned: the simple or literal meaning; the dialectical approach, or logical study of words and ideas in comparison with one another; the philological approach; and allegory. All four of these categories have been recognized and used extensively throughout the history of the Church. To these a fifth was added, a category germinally present in Philo,² and articulated in the New Testament: typology.

In the early Church was a running debate between Antioch and Alexandria as to whether Scripture should be interpreted literally or allegorically.³ The debate was revived by Jerome and Augustine and was won, for all practical purposes, by Augustine.⁴ He is quoted quite extensively in the

¹E. C. Blackman, Biblical Interpretation (London: Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1958), p. 10.

²Ibid., pp. 77f.

³James D. Wood, The Interpretation of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 52-51.

⁴Ibid., pp. 62-70.

hermeneutical works of the seventeenth century which are discussed in this study. Augustine favored the allegorical approach in interpretation, but he did not ignore the literal meaning of a passage. Generally we might say that his rules display a good deal of common sense.⁵

During the Middle Ages allegory was developed into the four-fold method of exegesis: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical.⁶ Perhaps the most-used commentaries of the Middle Ages were the glossa ordinaria, which quoted the opinions of the fathers on a verse and tried to reach a verdict. The glosses were written between the verses, much like a popular commentary today. Glossaries were also prevalent, which gave one the allegorical meanings of words in Scripture, and which were intended to be used as lexicons or Bible dictionaries.⁷

Another phenomenon of the Middle Ages was the rise of a new form of Jewish exegesis. Up to about the eleventh century the Rabbinic methods were still in common use among the Jews. But inspired by the grammatical study of the Arabs, Jewish exegetes began to challenge the older method in favor

⁵Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, translated with an introduction by D. W. Robertson, Jr., in The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1958), LXXX, 1-117.

⁶Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 42.

⁷Blackman, op. cit., p. 112.

of the new literal-grammatical method.⁸

With the Reformation came a more thoroughgoing revolution, elevating the literal sense. Humanism had succeeded in restoring grammar and rhetoric to a high position and saw the value of uncovering the original meanings of ancient writings. The new methods included linguistic and stylistic analysis, attention to relationship between the parts of a composition, and consideration of the cultural and thought-background.⁹ With Luther theological methodology underwent a change. Scripture was not mainly a collection of proof-passages, but raw material. It was to be collected, gathered, synthesized, and applied to the present situation and the universal needs of men. Not only was Scripture used as a source of theology, but theology was brought to bear on the interpretation of Scripture. Luther's Commentary on Galatians, for example, is an interpretation in the light of the distinction between Law and Gospel. Also the Bondage of the Will is a treatment based on the consensus of Scripture teaching. It may be true that this method would better be called exposition than exegesis, but Luther does, wherever it is necessary, appeal to the definition of a word, to the grammatical point, to a relationship within the text, such

⁸F. W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (New York: Dutton, 1886), pp. 461-466.

⁹Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1950), pp. 31ff.

as parallelism, or to the clear literal meaning of the text.

In general, however, hermeneutics proper was not a live topic in the days of Luther or in the early days of Lutheran orthodoxy. At least it was not much debated. Most of the hermeneutical material that appears is found in such works as introductions to the study of theology, designed as guides for beginning theological students.¹⁰ Even when prolegomena began to appear on a large scale, hermeneutics seems to have been considered a side issue, a purely exegetical subject. Hoenecke, in his dogmatics,¹¹ does not even mention the word in his historical survey of the development of prolegomena. There was at times some discussion of the rules of exegesis in the commentaries of the period, usually in the prefaces. There were also some works that discussed a number of the questions raised in the area of interpretation. But the subject did not become one of great interest until about the 1620's, as is indicated by the many volumes that appeared after that time dedicated entirely to the subject of hermeneutics, and discussing it in scientific detail.

The beginnings seem to have been made by Melancthon in two early works on language in general. The first of

¹⁰Cf. infra, pp. 14-17.

¹¹Adolf Hoenecke, Evangelische-Lutherische Dogmatik, zum Druck bearbeitet von seinen Söhnen Walter und Otto Hoenecke (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1909-1917), I, 1-31.

¹²Philipp Melancthon, Prolegomena Dialectices, Ibid., pp. 512-751. First edition, 1520.

these, Elementorum Rhetorices,¹² does not deal specifically with hermeneutics, but is primarily a textbook on rhetoric. Since rhetoric and sacred rhetoric, however, cannot be divorced, the latter receives some discussion. Melanchthon classifies the normal phenomena of language as a means of communication of ideas. Rhetorical devices are means through which ideas are communicated. Language, therefore, is logical in nature. While Melanchthon refers more often to pagan authors than to Scripture in this work, he still finds it necessary to include a discussion of the four-fold sense of Scripture.¹³

The second work, his Erotematum Dialectices,¹⁴ consists of definitions of logical terminology. It is built on the assumption that logic is clear and is inherent in language. But the proper use of language, especially for argumentation, requires scientific study of its nature and capabilities. Axioms and illustrations abound, although again only a few are taken from Scripture. It is language that is under discussion, language in which people must speak to be understood and in terms of which people think. Also Scripture obeys the rules of language.

¹²Philipp Melanchthon, Elementorum Rhetorices, in Corpus Reformatorum (Halis Saxonum: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1846), XIII, 416-506. First edition, 1519.

¹³The discussion covers seven pages (466-474) in this edition.

¹⁴Philipp Melanchthon, Erotematum Dialectices, Ibid., pp. 512-751. First edition, 1520.

This is the way we are accustomed to speak and write so that we do not pour forth ambiguities to others in our speech and in our writing; but we guide our speech along the lines of certain definite propositions and clear statements. From such a viewpoint we also read not only the profane writers but also the writings of the apostles and prophets, and that with the intention of investigating the statements in these writings just as we might investigate the decisions of judges; and we consider what they actually say and we do not attach diverse interpretations to the single verses as many have done with the Psalms and with Paul.¹⁵

It is significant that Luther had nothing but favorable comments to make concerning this work of Melanchthon.¹⁶

In a later work¹⁷ Melanchthon noted the importance of exegesis and professional interpreters, because simple people do not always understand the language and arrangement of the things discussed, and false interpretations must be refuted. He says,¹⁸

and let them attach themselves to the interpretations and testimonies of the pure Church (such as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), that they might retain the light of the Gospel.

He also says that any "correct and skilful interpretations" must be made by pious believers. But he does not involve himself in the actual rules of interpretation.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 578, translated by R. Preus, "The Rise and Development of Prolegomena in Lutheran Dogmatics," unpublished essay, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1959, pp. 7f.

¹⁶Preus, loc. cit.

¹⁷Tertia Aetas Locorum Theologicorum ab ipso Melanchthone Editorum, in Corpus Reformatorum, XXI, 560-1106.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 606f.

Not many years after the death of Luther a few individuals began to codify the canons of interpretation. One such was Andrea Hyperius. In his book on the study of theology¹⁹ he tries to set forth a theological methodology. About one-fourth of the book is devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. He mentions only seven simple rules for the reading of the Bible. (1) The mind should be free from all vain and earthly thoughts and concerns. (2) We should attempt to draw out the simple and necessary meaning of the words. Whoever looks for a hidden or second meaning will never arrive at the truth. (3) We should read the Scriptures always with the concern that practical fruits might come from our reading. And such fruits are manifold. (4) We must pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost Who alone makes us theologians (1 Corinthians 1:11). (5) We should explore the Scriptures continually; then what is unclear may often be cleared up in time. (6) We must employ patience in our study. When it sometimes takes so long for us to perceive things pertaining to human philosophy and earthly matters, we must realize that we will never fully understand the things which are of God. (7) We ought to employ doxology, and humbly thank God for those things we have learned in His Word.²⁰ After these suggestions Hyperius enters upon

¹⁹Andrea Hyperius, De Theologo seu de Ratione Studii Theologici (Basiliae: Joannis Operinus, 1556), pp. 1ff.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 80ff. Summary adapted from Preus, op. cit., pp. 15f.

a long discussion of specific difficulties and peculiarities in the Bible. Here he deals especially with problems that bothered or confused people in their reading. He offers hints to help avoid problems and errors that arise... His observations may seem rather obvious to the reader of today. He reminds us, for example, of the importance of comparing the original languages and of the nature and use of proper names. But he also has some observations that sound very modern and are emphasized by recent exegesis and Biblical theology. He tells us to make note of the literary units and parts of writings and their types (Gattungen); to consider the circumstances surrounding the event or passage; and to gather and compare all passages that speak to the passage under consideration. This last point was the basis for the whole discipline of dogmatics. Hyperius adds two appendices to his discussion, pointing out common errors or sources of obscurities that can arise in reading Scripture, and supplying helps for the student in reading Hebraisms.²¹ The first of these is reproduced in translation in APPENDIX A at the end of this paper. Figures of speech are stressed several times in the book, perhaps indicating that they were a problem at the time.²²

²¹Ibid., pp. 101-119.

²²Cf. also the "Apology to the Augsburg Confession," Triglott Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), III, 163.

In another work published six years later,²³ Hyperius went on to describe the phenomena of Scriptural language in more detail, in a fashion resembling Melanchthon's Elementorum Rhetorices referred to above, except that he restricts the discussion to the Bible. In the preface²⁴ to this work he describes the nature of Scripture. It was revealed for men's salvation, and was therefore given in the language of men. Since Christians depend on this Word they must be able to understand it and know eternal life. Some things are given openly in the Bible, while others are clothed in figurative language; still others are hidden in parables and the like and require the Holy Spirit to give understanding. Hyperius stresses the fact that mere knowledge, or wisdom, is not enough, but that interpretation of Scripture must lead also to the fear of God.²⁵

In 1558, in the preface to his short commentary on Matthew,²⁶ David Chytraeus offers some brief rules for the interpretation of Holy Writ. We need only list them here.

²³Andreas Hyperius, De formandis concionibus sacris, seu de interpretatione scripturarum populari. Libri II. (Marpurgi: Andreas Colibus, 1562), pp. 1ff.

²⁴Or Epistola Muncupatoria. The pages are unnumbered.

²⁵" . . . omnium adeo vicinorum Vederaviam incolentum utilitatem, constitueretis. Quod opus vel solum pariter sapientiam ac Dei timorem ostentat."

²⁶David Chytraeus, Commentarius in Matthaeum evangelistam ex Praelectionibus Davidus Chytzaei collectus (Vitebergae: Iohannes Crato, 1558), pp. 1ff.

(1) Refer single passages (partes) to specific loci communes. In this way doctrines are confirmed to faith and consciences aided. (2) Logically separate the members of a series so as to facilitate teaching. (3) Grammatically interpret, watching for figures and illustrations used. (4) Refute corrupt interpretations. Chytraeus apparently believed that historical background is also important for exegesis, since he furnishes an overview of the New Testament era in a chronological table. This is then followed by a twenty-page discussion of the difference between Law and Gospel, including six rules for discerning them in Scripture. His entire discussion of the subject is reviewed below in Chapter III. Included in Chytraeus' discussion is a brief list of Messianic prophecies and the various causes of Law and Gospel. From this discussion it is clear that hermeneutics as a science is still only latent in Chytraeus. It is developing more along theological lines than along scientific lines.

The next important writer to deal with the subject of interpretation was Martin Chemnitz in his Examen.²⁷ His purpose here is obviously apologetic. He discusses the restriction of the right of interpretation to the bishops, saying that the bishops do not, for one thing, have the only true interpretation handed down to them, but mere tradition.²⁸

²⁷Martin Chemnitz, Examen Concilii Tridentini (Francofurti ad Moenum: apud Georgium Coruinum, impensis Sigismundi Feyerabend, 1566-1573), pp. 280ff.

Furthermore, the gift of interpretation is not restricted to the Pope and his bishops. There are rather certain rules of interpretation that must be followed. The Popes ignore them and thus show that they do not have the gift at all.²⁸ When the Pope imposes a corrupt interpretation on the Church he seeks justification from the Fathers, and he overrides the most clear and simple passages of Scripture merely on the basis of his own authority. Chemnitz drives home the point that it is the simple people who are often better able to interpret Scripture because they do not come with human persuasions, but listen to the clear Word of God.²⁹

From all this it is clear that Chemnitz believed, in general, that exegesis is a task of which any Christian is capable, and that learning is sometimes a drawback, unless it be learning almost exclusively in the Scripture. Tradition is of little value in the task of interpretation. On the surface it may seem that there is here a contradiction between Chemnitz and Melanchthon on two issues. Melanchthon sets great store by the traditional interpretation of the Church, while Chemnitz says tradition has little value, if any. But the contradiction is only apparent, since Chemnitz is referring to tradition as perverted by the Roman Church,

²⁸On this point compare the discussion by Jaroslav Pelikan, "Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism," Lutheran World, III (December, 1956), 214-222.

²⁹Chemnitz, loc. cit.

made a governing and rigid rule. The other point of contrast is on the need for skilled interpreters. This contrast is in keeping with Lutheran tradition, namely that Scripture is clear enough to be sufficient for salvation for anyone, but it is also necessary to have men skilled in the Scriptures for the sake of resolving difficulties, confirming consciences, and refuting the perverters of Scripture.

In his Loci³⁰ Chemnitz deals more specifically with hermeneutics. In his discussion de Deo he reproduces and explains nine rules which the scholastics had established for legitimately finding passages about the Trinity in the Old Testament and interpreting these passages.³¹ The rules are profound in their simplicity. There are no exegetical handspings to go through to discover the sense of such passages. Other hermeneutical observations are scattered throughout the Loci, under the categories opera Trinitatis ad extra and ad intra, under the divinity and the humanity of Christ, etc.³¹

Chemnitz and his contemporaries were more concerned with helping the Christian interpret Scripture for himself than in interpreting it for him and in making exegesis a

³⁰Martin Chemnitz, Loci Theologici (Francofurti ad Moenum: Ioannes Spies, 1591), Vols. I-III.

³¹Ibid., I, 38-40; 53-60. Some of these rules are summarized in APPENDIX B at the end of this paper.

scholarly discipline. Exegesis is practical. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Chemnitz began, although he never lived to finish it, a harmony of the four Gospels. The express purpose of this work, according to the introduction which is probably by Gerhard, was to set down the words and works of Christ in chronological order, so that Christians might not be confused and disquieted by errorists.³²

In 1567 Flacius published his Clavis Scripturae Sacrae,³³ a work that might seem to contradict what has just been said above, that hermeneutics was not a scientific discipline until later times. But Flacius was a precocious individual. It was not only in hermeneutics that he anticipated the approach of later writers. He also anticipated the analytic method in dogmatics, the origin of which has been credited to Calixt, who lived about one hundred years after him.³⁴ In the second volume of his Clavis he outlines the synthetic (local) method, the analytic method, and a third, the definitive method.³⁵

Nevertheless, the Clavis is not quite as scientific in

³²Martin Chemnitz, Polycarp Leyser, John Gerhard, Harmonia Quatuor Evangelistarum (Francofurti et Hamburgi: Zacharia Hertelius Bibliopola, 1652), Epistola Dedicatoria.

³³Matthius Flacius Illyricus, Clavis Scripturae Sacrae (Lipsiae: Johannis Justi Erythropili, 1695; editio prima, 1567), Vols. I-II.

³⁴Heenecke, op. cit., p. 326: "Die analytische Methode ward bekanntlich zuerst von Calixt in seinem Epitome theologiae eingefuehrt."

³⁵Flacius, op. cit., II, opposite p. 56.

method as it may appear at first glance. Volume one is a lexicon of Biblical terms based on the Latin Bible. It contains definitions and discussion of the Hebrew and Greek terms. There are also two indices, one dealing with the terms discussed, listed in alphabetical order, and the other listing the Scripture verses quoted. We are reminded of the Medieval glossaries. Volume two contains tractates on the phenomena of Scripture, with charts on various topics interspersed, and two large indices. In this volume he deals mainly with difficulties in Scripture. He lists fifty-one causes of difficulty (characteristics and phenomena of Scripture), with eight remedies, sixty rules, and twenty-seven precepts; then follow twenty more specific causes of difficulty, with thirty-four solutions. For reconciling contradictions he offers twenty-three rules. He also has discussions on the parts of speech and rhetorical devices, and even a series of distinctions to be made to attain coherence in the reading of the prophets. These last are reproduced in translation in APPENDIX C, to indicate the practical nature of Flacius' rules.³⁶

³⁶W. Gasz, Geschichte der Protestantischen Dogmatik in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Theologie ueberhaupt (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1854), I, 160f. comes to the same conclusion. He says that according to Flacius, one must investigate the circumstances of every Scripture locus: the readers, purpose and context, doctrinal and practical sections, habits and peculiarities of the author. Analysis and notice of rhetorical figures, rules of speech, and explanations of names are fruitful beginnings for a historical interpretation

From this outline we can see that Flacius has tried to cover everything, but his approach to the subject is still less than systematic. He has not done anything really new. Much of his material is very similar to that of Melancthon, which has been discussed above.³⁷ Nevertheless, Flacius paved the way for an adequate Biblical hermeneutics.³⁸

The concern over exegesis and hermeneutics did not arise in a vacuum. It was motivated largely by the attacks against Scripture from the Roman camp, especially from Bellarmine (1542-1621). John Gerhard, in the first presentation of hermeneutics since Flacius,³⁹ his tractate on the legitimate interpretation of Holy Scripture,⁴⁰ directs his arguments against Bellarmine. In the foreword he accuses Bellarmine of making Scripture of no effect on the basis that it is unclear and insufficient. Gerhard compares the then current

Thus one would overcome mechanism and atomism in interpretation. "Flacius," he says, "also knew the difference between popular and learned interpretation."

³⁷Supra, pp. 12-14.

³⁸Gasz, op. cit., I, 160: "Seine Regeln verrathen hermeneutischen Takt und Scharfsinn; er hat der lebendigeren Anschauung, welche die Reformation in die Bibel trug, theoretischen Ausdruck gegeben und sich erhoben ueber die atomistische Behandlung eines unterschiedslos inspirirten Textes."

³⁹So Bengt Haegglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung ueber das altlutherische Schriftverstaendnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1951), p. 207.

⁴⁰John Gerhard, Tractatus de Legitima Scripturae Sacrae Interpretatione (Ienae: Johannis Jakobi Bauhofferi, 1663; editio prima, 1610), pp. lff.

state of affairs with that of the time of Irenaeus, who fought the heretics who were perverting the clear Scriptures. Bellarmine argued that we cannot tell the sense of Scripture, since it has many senses. Which is the true one? So Gerhard found it necessary to point out the common-sense rules for exegesis. He deals mainly with the question of the authority of the Church in interpreting, and spends over half the book on this question. But he also lists series of canons, rules and axioms to be employed. These rules have not been worked out into a logical structure, but are often just a series of observations. Gerhard deals also with the questions of allegory and type. This is surprisingly early for such a "sophisticated" consideration among the Lutherans. But Gerhard is motivated by his anti-Roman concerns and attempts to show the illegitimacy of the use of allegory by Rome and Bellarmine.

Nine years later, in 1619, there appeared an unusual book by Wolfgang Franz.⁴¹ According to the title-page it was quite popular among the students, and went through three editions.⁴² This book presents only two simple rules, and then goes on to illustrate their application in a host of passages, all thoroughly discussed. In 1623 Solomon Glasius, a student of Gerhard at Jena, published his Philologia

⁴¹Wolfgang Franz, Tractatus theologicus novus et perspicuus (Wittebergae: Matthaei Seelfisch, 1619), pp. 1ff.

⁴²Edition tertia, 1668.

Sacra, a classic catalog of the linguistic phenomena of the Bible and defense of the sola Scriptura principle.⁴³

It was not until 1654 that there appeared a definitive work on the subject. This was Dannhauer's Hermeneutica Sacra.⁴⁴ In the first half of this book Dannhauer describes the purposes, uses, and ends of interpretation. He maintains that its purpose is to render faithfully the clear sense of the Bible by the application of all the faculties (encyclo-pediae, philosophiae, et philologiae). We may observe a slight change in approach here. He does not make a strong case for oratio, meditatio, and tentatio, nor for the need for the Holy Spirit, nor for perseverance, as the earlier men had done. Exegesis had by then begun to become a science in its own right. The interpreter came bringing skills. While he does mention faith as a prerequisite for interpretation, methodology seems more important. Gasz declares, "If one had learned the phases (scope, subject, means, etc.) with all the definitions and some abstract rules with examples, then one had compiled a hermeneutica sacra."⁴⁵ It is for this reason that we shall not concern ourselves much with the books of this period, but shall but briefly summarize this one as a typical example.

⁴³Salomon Glassius, Philologia Sacra (Lipsiae: Jo. Friderici Gleditschii B. Filium, 1725; editio prima, 1623), pp. lff.

⁴⁴Johann Conrad Dannhauer, Hermeneutica Sacra (Argentorati: Josiae Staedelii, 1654), pp. lff.

⁴⁵Gasz, op. cit., p. 162.

As Dannhauer moves into the categories of hermeneutics proper, grammar becomes a necessity. Then the sections of the text must be noted and distinguished. Other versions should be consulted. Solecisms and barbarisms must be vindicated. After this, one must be sure to consult the Jewish commentators, although critically, since they have many idiotismi. Hebraisms and Hellenisms must be noted. As for Greek, grammar, syntax, and logical progression are the important factors. Figures of speech are considered, as well as antiquities, geography, politics, etc., or the general environment. When all this is done, one must collate other Scripture on the same subject. With Chytraeus this was the first step. While it would be unfair to say that doctrine, or the analogy of Scripture, has become less important, it is nevertheless true that exegesis has become isolated as a separate discipline. No longer does dogmatics stand at the service of the interpreter. He trusts his findings first and only secondarily the formulated doctrine. Perhaps this is because dogmatics has by this time become so burdened with necessary categories and distinctions that the interpreter has had to start all over and collect his own passages. At any rate, the two disciplines have become largely divorced by this time.

Dannhauer's next rule is to consult the commentators. It is interesting to notice that this is placed next to last in the task of exegesis, but not altogether eliminated.

Finally, the interpreter may launch into his polemics. We may observe that this seems a safe and sensible methodology. We also notice the lack of any mention of lexicons or concordances. This is not because such were not available at the time, but they do seem to have been comparatively scarce. Even Calov⁴⁶ in 1681 lists a lack of concordances as one of the causes of error in interpretation. But the lack of any stress on such works gives the impression that words in themselves were not considered of primary importance. Instead, logical structure, context, and environment receive the accent.

Lest we jump to the conclusion that exegesis has become an entirely scientific, able, and self-confident discipline, we should take note of a commentary on Nahum and Habakkuk published by Matthaeus Hafenreffer (d. 1619) and reprinted in 1663.⁴⁷ In the foreword he discusses the value of studying the prophets. He notes that there will always be unsolved problems, especially in the prophets, who can sometimes be very obscure. One difficulty he notes is with the types, which are not always obvious, and are sometimes confusing. Sometimes we can only stop and praise the mystery that is beyond our comprehension. Thus the study of hermeneutics

⁴⁶Abraham Calov, Biblia Illustrata (Dresdae et Lipsiae: Johannis Christophori Zimmermanni, 1719; editio prima 1681-2), p. 15.

⁴⁷Matthaeus Hafenreffer, Commentaria in Prophetam Nahum et Habacuc (Stuttgardiae: Joannis W. Roesslini, 1663), pp. 16f.

has not produced an easy optimism; nor has the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit been forgotten.

After Dannhauer's work a number of books on the subject appeared. It was considered at length by Calov in his commentary on Genesis,⁴⁸ his Biblia Illustrata, and his dogmatics. August Pfeiffer in 1680 published his volume,⁴⁹ which was very much like that of Dannhauer. Early in the eighteenth century a rash of titles appeared, authored by Fracke, Rambach, and others.

In the sixteenth century exegesis was not a specialized task. Any intelligent Christian could interpret the Scriptures with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Interpretation was practical and spiritual in nature. But the attacks of Rome on the clarity of the Bible brought replies and codified hermeneutics, so that the need was recognized for definite rules of interpretation. The spiritual nature of the task, while not forgotten, was not emphasized in the latter part of the seventeenth century; exegesis became a task that required skill and learning.

⁴⁸Abraham Calov, Commentarius in Genesin (Wittebergae: Michaelis Meyeri, 1671), pp. lff.

⁴⁹August Pfeiffer, Critica Sacra (Lipsiae: Mart. Gabrielli Huebneri, 1688; editio prima, 1680), pp. lff.

CHAPTER III

THE REGULA FIDEI

Definition

In the period of high orthodoxy there was one factor which was considered most important of all in interpreting Scripture. That was the regula fidei, the rule of faith. This factor made Lutheran exegesis distinctive. It was the practical expression of the sola Scriptura principle, as propounded by Luther. Because of the application of the regula fidei, the Old Testament was saved from the hands of those who wished to abolish it or make it of little effect. On the one hand the Roman Catholics wished to allegorize it and subject it to the inclinations of the Pope, and on the other hand the sects wished to make it merely a law-book, or worse yet, a heathen book. Orthodoxy had to defend itself against both attacks and uphold the integrity of the Old Testament. This was not merely done in the realm of theory, in dogmatics and polemics, but the commentaries also evidence the application of the regula fidei in exegesis.

The principle of the regula fidei was not new with the Lutherans. It had been set forth by the Roman Catholic Church long before Luther ever appeared on the scene. But it meant something different for the Lutherans that it had before. The Papists had urged four means of interpretation:

the regula fidei, the praxis ecclesiae, the consensus of the interpretation of the fathers, and the decrees of the councils.¹ Gerhard takes up these four points and shows the weakness in the argument of Rome and the differences in understanding between the two parties.

As to the regula fidei Gerhard says that we (the Lutherans) understand by it clear passages of Scripture and the Apostles' Creed, but the Papists prepare another rule of faith: traditions. But traditions can only be accepted if they agree with Scripture. If not, they must be rejected.² By praxis ecclesiae the Papists meant those things which the Pope proclaimed ex cathedra, while the Lutherans understood it as that which the Holy Ghost spoke in Scripture. Gerhard does not reject the consensus of the fathers or the decrees of councils, but he does subject them to the Scriptures. He says that the Lutherans do not spurn these four means, but magnify them; yet only after testing their truth with Scripture.³

¹John Gerhard, Tractatus de Legitima Scripturae Sacrae Interpretatione (Ienae: Johannis Jacobi Bauhofferi, 1663; editio prima, 1610), p. 30. Hereafter this work will be referred to as De Legitima Interpretatione.

²Ibid., p. 31: ". . . proinde si traditiones consentiunt cum Scriptura, eas acceptamus: si vero dissentiunt, jure eas repudiamus."

³Ibid., p. 32: "Non improbamus haec media, sed quemadmodum illi addunt, regulam fidei, quam Papa probat; praxin Ecclesiae, quam Papa servat: Patrum interpretationes eas demum sequendas, quas Papa non repudiat: illorum Conciliorum

The Roman objections to the Lutheran use of the rule of faith was based on the belief that Scripture is obscure, which in turn was essential to the doctrine of the authority of the Church. The point that was really at issue, says Preus, was whether the Church is above Scripture or Scripture above the Church.⁴

The Lutherans insisted on the perspicuity of the Bible. It was not necessary, therefore, to appeal to a multitude of interpreters on a given passage, but to Scripture itself.⁵ Nor did exegesis require any external light or far-fetched interpretation.⁶ It required only the collation of passages

Decreta amplectanda, quae Papa confirmat; ita patiantur, a nobis itidem addi, veram fidei regulam esse, quam Scriptura proponit: veram Ecclesiae praxin esse, quam Scriptura approbat, veram Patrum interpretationem esse, quae Scripturae non adversatur; vera esse Conciliorum Decreta, quae Scripturis sunt conformia."

⁴Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), pp. 160f.

⁵Bengt Haeggglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung ueber das altlutherische Schriftverstaendnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1951), p. 174, footnote 34, quoting Gerhard, Commentarius super Genesin: "Veritatem in fidei articulis non esse aestimandam ex Confessorum multitudine vel paucitate, sed ex dogmatis alicujus cum fidei regula, hoc est, cum Scripturis sacris conformitate."

⁶Gerhard, op. cit., p. 24: ". . . ad illa igitur intelligenda et interpretanda non requiritur externum quoddam lumen, aut interpretatione longe petita." Cf. Salomon Glasius, Philologia Sacra (Lipsiae: Jo. Friderici Gleditschii B. Filium, 1725), pp. 391-399.

that speak clearly on the issue in question. Calov warns, however, against making such a collation from passages too diverse, i. e., out of context or on a different subject, as is often the case when a concordance is used uncritically.⁷

The regula fidei may be defined as the total content of Scripture teaching or a summary thereof. It is a collection of the clearest passages of Scripture.⁸ An example of it from Scripture itself occurs in the temptation of Christ, where He collects passages to refute the Devil.⁹

The regula has two parts: that which deals with faith, and that which deals with love. The first is summarized in the Apostolic Creed; the second in the Decalogue.¹⁰ Gerhard often identifies the Creed with Scripture, and makes it normative for interpretation. It might appear that he is adding a second principle to the sola Scriptura, or at least making a concession to the tradition-principle despite his anti-Romanism. But this is not the case. The Creed is only identical with the basic content of Scripture. Thus the Scripture principle and the regula fidei are not two principles, but two expressions of the same sola Scriptura

⁷Abraham Calov, Biblia Illustrata (Dresdae et Lipsiae: Johannis Christophori Zimmermanni, 1719), I, 20.

⁸Gerhard, op. cit., p. 25: "Ex perspicuis illis locis colligitur regula fidei, quae est summa quaedam coelestis doctrinae, ex apertissimis Scripturae locis collecta.

⁹Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 25.

principle.¹¹

The regula fidei consists primarily of the articles of faith, and secondarily of the rest of Scripture which supports these articles. Thus the regula is everything that is revealed in Scripture, and at the same time only the articles of faith.¹² It may also be defined as Law and Gospel.¹³ In any case, the regula fidei is the essential content of Scripture, and can therefore be identified therewith. It can and must be applied as a norm for the exposition of Scripture.¹⁴ With this identification in mind we may say that Scripture is at once its own norma normans and norma normata. Since the regula is not a generalized totality of Scripture, but consists of clear passages, it can be the one valid norm of interpretation. It has validity, we should note, only when it corresponds exactly with Scripture and summarizes its chief contents.¹⁵

An illustration or two may profitably be used to clarify further the definition of the regula fidei. In 1 Peter 2:24 the clause appears, "who his own self bare our sins in

¹¹Haegglund, op. cit., p. 183.

¹²John Gerhard, Loci Theologici (Edidit Cotta; Tubingae: n. p., 1767-1781), II, 355: "Scriptura et fides nostra sunt aequalis latitudinis. Fides nec plura nec minus debet amplecti, quam est in Scripturis revelatum."

¹³Haegglund, op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 184, 209.

his own body on the tree" The question arises whether it was only the body that bore the sins. Gerhard, commenting on this passage, says that the phrase "in his body" is a synecdoche for the whole human nature, body and soul. He proves this from Isaiah 53:10, "He shall make his soul an offering," and 53:12, "He poured out his soul unto death." The body is mentioned by Peter because that is what was visible on the cross.¹⁶ We see here that Gerhard is assuming that Scripture must agree with itself. One clear passage cannot contradict another. In this case the two passages complement one another.

A second illustration is in Gerhard's comment on 1 Peter 1:2, ". . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He says that the sprinkling of the blood of Christ is the application of His benefits; by faith our hearts are sprinkled and cleansed from sin, Romans 3:25. The same verb, *rantizein*, is used in Psalm 51:9 ("Purge me with hyssop."), where it stands for the Hebrew word *chitte'*, to expiate or absolve. Expiation was made by the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood. Isaiah 52:15 says that the Messiah "shall sprinkle many nations."¹⁷ The high priest was also

¹⁶John Gerhard, *Commentarius super priorem D. Petri epistolam* (Jenae: Johannis Reiffenbergeri, 1641), p. 297.

¹⁷Not all Old Testament scholars today agree that "sprinkle" is the meaning here, but this is ultimately immaterial. Gerhard's concordance study is often vast and includes every possibility. He sometimes has too much of a good thing.

sprinkled with blood, Leviticus 8:30. And the sprinkling was ordained and consecrated by God, Exodus 29:21; 24:8. Since Christ is the antitype of the high priest (Hebrews 9:20), the sprinkling refers to our absolution before God by the blood of Christ, the source of our royal priesthood, Revelation 1:6; Romans 12:1.¹⁸ Two things are clear from Gerhard's exposition here. He has made use of a concordance to elucidate the passage in the light of the whole Bible. More important, he uses both the Old and New Testament passages as on a par with one another to shed light on the passage in question; yet he is cognizant of the differences in time and circumstance. He does not base any interpretation on a tenuous or theoretical exegesis, but relies on a host of passages on the subject.

The regula fidei is then normative for the interpretation of Scripture. It is not merely an expression of what is believed, but is also a regula credendi. Its contents must be believed for salvation, not only with historical, but also with justifying faith.¹⁹ Therefore it must be normative for all who wish to understand or interpret Scripture.

Relation to Perspicuity of Scripture

The principle of the regula fidei may also be expressed

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 35f.

¹⁹Haegglund, op. cit., p. 180.

in another way: Scriptura sui ipsius interpres (Scripture is its own interpreter.). This means that darker or more obscure passages in the Bible are to be interpreted by clearer ones, drawn from the regula fidei. Thus every correct exposition can become a part of the regula. In this way Scripture comes to interpret itself.²⁰

This principle, that Scripture interprets itself, rests on the perspicuity of Holy Writ, just as the Roman tradition-principle rests on its darkness and obscurity.²¹ Bellarmine had said that Scripture is not able to say what is its true sense. It must be interpreted by the Church, which alone knows its true sense.²² To this the Lutherans answered that all interpretation must be literal and proper. It cannot depart from the words, especially in articles of faith, unless Scripture itself shows the literal grammatical sense to be improper.²³

The Papists further objected that the methods of the Lutherans were faulty because they were the methods of all heretics, Jews, and pagans, and that such methods can reach only human probability. Gerhard granted the former because

²⁰Ibid., p. 183.

²¹Ibid., pp. 209f.

²²Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, pp. 19f.

²³Ibid., p. 56: "A litera, praesertim in fidei articulis non esse discedendum, nisi ipsa Scriptura improprietatem ostendat et exponat."

God gave Holy Writ for all to read and know. But he insisted that the same methods actually refuted the heretics, Jews and pagans.²⁴ To the second charge Gerhard answered that the Lutherans only investigate what the Holy Spirit has said and the way He said it. Thus the Holy Ghost Himself is the judge.²⁵ The exposition of the Lutherans, on which their doctrine is grounded, is not mere interpretation, but possesses divine authority.

The regula fidei has two important characteristics: it is clear and it is consistent. No article of faith fails of apt and clear words in Scripture.²⁶ And the regula must not be taken to be used against itself, but in harmony with itself.²⁷ If a passage remains obscure, it can be interpreted in any way not out of harmony with the regula.²⁸

Gerhard's faith in the perspicuity of the Bible and his confidence in the regula, or the whole of Scripture teaching, is evident from his suggested curriculum for the study of theology. For the first year he recommends a cursory reading of the Bible, with no analysis, comments, or

²⁴Ibid., p. 40.

²⁵Ibid., p. 41.

²⁶Ibid., p. 56: "Nullum esse fidei dogma, quod non alibi propriis et perspicuis verbis in Scriptura proponatur."

²⁷Ibid.: "Regulam fidei acceptandam esse integram, neque ejus partes sibi invicem opponendas esse."

²⁸Ibid.: "Si in loci obscurioribus genuinam sensum non possumus assequi, tamen a regula fidei non esse discedendum."

interpretation.²⁹ He wants the student to live with the Bible so that, among other things, it will have an effect on him throughout the year. But he also wants the student to have a grasp of what the Bible is saying in general, so that he can fit a passage into the context of the whole revelation of God. Detailed exegesis can come later. How can anyone interpret the Bible if he hasn't even read it?

This is not to say that Gerhard allowed for the "Schrift-ganz" of modern positive theology. He will not allow categories to be imposed on the Bible unless they are derived from a clear statement of the Bible itself. Even the title "New Testament" is permissible only because it is derived from such passages as Jeremiah 31:32.³⁰

Because Scripture is perfectly clear it can be understood by anyone. Gerhard often appeals to the Rabbis of ancient and modern times alike to support his exposition of an Old Testament text. Commenting on Deuteronomy 18:15 he considers it obvious that the prophet to come is not Joshua or the other prophets, but Christ.³¹ He points out that not only the older Rabbis so understood it, but that even the

²⁹John Gerhard, Methodus Studii Theologici (Lipsiae: Johann Glueck, 1617), p. 147.

³⁰John Gerhard, Annotationes Postumae in Evangelium D. Matthaei, Apostoli et Evangelisti (Jena: Georgi Sengevaldi, 1663), p. 1146.

³¹John Gerhard, Commentarius super Deuteronomium (Jenae: Joh. Ludovici Neuenhant, 1657), p. 1120.

Turks admit that the passage is best understood of Christ.³²

With such a firm confidence in the clarity of Scripture and the validity of the regula fidei, Gerhard can speak about the more obscure passages of the Bible and establish canons for the resolution of difficulties. He finds it necessary to distinguish the nature or cause of the obscurity. There are, he says, two kinds of more obscure passages: those obscure in themselves and those clear in themselves, but obscure when compared with other passages. The latter can be resolved by the application of the regula fidei.³³ Passages that are obscure in themselves are so either because of the subject or because of the words. If it is the subject that is obscure, the Holy Ghost will give illumination, unless it is a mystery of faith.³⁴ If it is the words that are obscure, then they are so either because their proper sense is not understood or because they are figurative. If the difficulty lies in the proper sense, grammar and usage will help. If these are studied and the passage still

³²Ibid.

³³Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 26. Cf. p. 54: "Veteres Rabini dixerunt: In quocunque loco Scripturae invenis pro haereticis objectionem, statim invenies medicamentum in latere ejus. Etenim Scriptura, ubi obscurius loquitur, semet ipse explicat, aliquando statim in eodem loco, aliquando in locis aliis uberrime. Mosis Scripta illustrant Prophetas et Vetus Testamentum in Novo aperitur."

³⁴Ibid., p. 26; cf. Gerhard, Disputationes Isagogicae (Jenae: Joh. Ludovici Neuenhahns Bibliop., 1663), p. 212: "Res Dei sunt obscurae, res Scripturae sunt perspicuae."

makes no sense, it must be metaphorical or symbolic.³⁵

Relation to the Holy Spirit

In Gerhard's mind two thoughts were basic for interpretation: the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and the use of the regula fidei. Since the Holy Ghost was the supreme author of Scripture, He is also its authentic interpreter.³⁶ Since He does not speak to us today, except in the Bible, it follows for Gerhard that legitimate interpretation is to be sought from Scripture itself.³⁷

The regula is nothing else than a collection of clear passages in which we meet the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and therefore it must be used as a rule in interpreting the dark passages.³⁸

Like Luther, Gerhard recognized that Scripture has an external clarity that brings a fides historica, but for a

³⁵Ibid.: "Quis enim dextra interpretabitur illas Saluatoris parabolas de fermento, zizaniis, grano siapis, vinea, etc. nisi proprietates eorum naturales exacte vel ad minimum populariter perspectas habuerit?"

³⁶Haegglund, op. cit., p. 208; Gerhard, Loci Theologici (ed. Cotta), II, 422: "Ad Spiritum ergo sanctum pertinet interpretatio Scripturae, qui cum non nisi in scripturis et per scripturas hodie nobiscum loquitur, consequens est, legitimam scripturas interpretationem ex ipsa scriptura esse petendam."

³⁷Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 3.

³⁸Gerhard, Loci Theologici (ed. Cotta), II, 369: "Sententiam suam in locis perspicuis et clarioribus manifeste exposuit, ex quibus colligitur fidei analogia ad quam obscuriorum interpretatio exigendi"

saving knowledge of the articles of faith the inner witness of the Spirit is needed.³⁹ To those who are enlightened by the Spirit, Scripture is clear (Proverbs 6:23; Psalm 19:9).⁴⁰ But this comes only with diligent handling and use of the Word, for the Spirit does not witness to anyone directly, but always enlightens through the word of Scripture. It is there and there alone that His light is to be sought.⁴¹ As reasons for diligent Bible reading Gerhard offers the following: Without revelation there is no saving knowledge of God; that comes only through the Word. In that Word God speaks to us and from it we derive wisdom. Scripture is the

³⁹Haeggglund, op. cit., p. 211, quoting Gerhard, Loci Theologici (ed. Cotta), I, 26f.: "Claritatem verbi externam non excludere necessitatem interioris illuminationis et claritatis a Spiritu S. petendae et impetrandae."

⁴⁰The Lutherans insisted that only the regenerate were able to understand Scripture. To the question, "Does regenerate man oppose the literal sense according to regenerate reason?" Gerhard answered, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 82, "Minime vero, etiamsi enim talis hominis ratio renata sit, tamen quatenus ex suis principiis vult disputare contra fidei articulos, eatenus non amplius est renata, quia renata ratio ex verbi principiis disputat. Qui ex rationis principiis contra mysteria fidei disputat, facit id non qua Christianus, sed qua homo abutens Philosophia. Ut ergo, qui ex Deo natus est, peccatum non facit 1 Joh. 3. v. 9 nimirum quatenus talis est et quatenus regenerationis gratiam retinet; si vero concupiscentias carnis sequi velit, peccat et fit morti obnoxius, Rom. 8. v. 13. ita renata ratio non ad-versatur fidei articulis, nimirum quatenus talis est, et quatenus ductum verbi sequitur, si vero ex suis principiis verbum DEI velit oppugnare, errat et non amplius est renata."

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 23f.: "Non ergo cogitandum est, prius a Spiritu sancto immediatam e supernis illuminationem expectandam esse, quam ad Scripturas legendas, meditandas et perscrutandas accedamus: sed in et per Scripturas lux illa Spiritus sancti quaerenda et impetranda"

principium of all theology. It is perfect. Even the royal prophet commends reading and meditation in it for our example.⁴² In short, one must be a Christian to understand and interpret the Bible. He must have saving faith, drawn from the Word. It is not a matter of the confluence of the Spirit-filled Word and the spirit of man, but the Holy Spirit does all the moving in a straight line. As much as Gerhard stressed the inner enlightenment of the Spirit, he never gave that enlightenment any power of itself. Always it was the Spirit working through the Word.⁴³

Because the regula fidei is put in first place as the means of exposition, one necessarily arrives at both the sensus Spiritus sancti and the sensus literalis at the same time.⁴⁴ In point of fact, the two are identical. This does

⁴²Gerhard, Methodus Studii Theologici, pp. 140-142.

⁴³Haegglund, op. cit., p. 217.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 223. Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 58 maintains that the Holy Ghost intended one proper and genuine sense for each passage. The allegorical, tropological and anagogical are not various senses, but collections and accommodations of the one sense. If these stand, then we could also establish other senses, such as a sacramental sense. Cf. Abraham Calov, "De Scripturae S. sensu et Interpretatione," Commentarius in Genesin, p. 47: ". . . unicus ille nativus, ac germanus, quam intendit Spiritus S. in quovis textu unice adversatur, ac vindicetur." Pp. 79-84: "There is only one sense of Scripture, for (1) The nature of a sense is in the form of the words. They can denote only one thing. It may be true that the mystic sense is an accidens, but then it is not a distinct sense. (2) The nature of a word is that of a conceptual sign. One sign is equivalent to one concept, not several. The Holy Ghost does not speak equivocally like the Delphic oracle spoke of old.

not mean, however, that only the literal-grammatical sense is intended by the Holy Ghost.⁴⁵ One must distinguish between sensus literalis and sensus literae,⁴⁶ lest he be bound to mere grammatical exegesis and fail to produce the intended sense. Significantly enough, it was after the decline of orthodoxy that exegesis became analytic, with philological study and analysis of detail, rather than synthetic and with a view to the whole Scripture.⁴⁷ The literal

(3) To speak of a proper and improper use of a term is a contradiction. (4) Scripture is certain. If it has several senses, then it cannot be so. (5) Truth is a unity. It cannot have disparate parts. (6) Scripture is clear. If there are many senses, then it must be obscure. (7) The aim of Scripture is to lead us to wisdom. But if there are many senses, then it must propagate error. (8) No passage can be shown to have such multiple senses. (9) It was the Jews who invented this fable. (10) It is a canon of theology that arguments can only be based on the literal sense, for if there are several valid senses, which is the one intended by the Holy Ghost? And as Thomas said, 'Solum sensum literalem esse argumentativum.' If the objection be raised that the Apostles themselves did not always use the literal sense, we answer that they did not so much wish to argue as to show us by the Spirit who filled them, the divine mysteries depicted even in the Old Testament. It is too great a risk to have too many senses, for then opposite statements could be proved from the same verse." (The foregoing is a summary selection of quotations.) Cf. also Gerhard, op. cit., p. 8: "Proton pseudos totius structura est, quod Spiritus S. sensum a verbis Scripturae separant, quae tamen non separanda et destrahenda, sed conjungenda sunt arctissime. Spiritus sanctus in Scripturis et per Scripturas ad nos loquitur, ergo in illis ipsis Scripturae verbis sonat Spiritus S. vox et sententia Verba Scripturae sunt verba Spiritus S., ejus ergo mentem nobis exponunt."

⁴⁵Haeggglund, op. cit., p. 224.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 240. Cf. Salomon Glassius, op. cit., p. 366.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 241.

meaning of a text is also its spiritual meaning, not just an external historical description. There is no real difference between the two questions, "What does the text say?" and "What does it mean?"

There are other names that Gerhard uses for the sensus Spiritus sancti. He calls it the sensus proprius to distinguish it from the types involved in a passage. Thus the Old Testament speaks of Christ not only in types, but also in sensu proprio.⁴⁸ Another term he uses is sensus mysticus. This sense is identical with the literal sense when doctrinal or moral content is expressed in direct language. Where the intention of the Holy Ghost was expressed in non-direct language (as for example, types or parables), then the passage contained both an external and an internal meaning in the same words.⁴⁹ Thus Gerhard could speak of a duplex sensus in Scripture. His student, Glassius, made it clear, however, that this was to be distinguished from the Roman four-fold sense,⁵⁰ even though this approach was partly a return to the pre-Reformation spiritualizing exegesis. The difference lay in the fact that Gerhard's mystical sense was based on the literal sense and was not allowed to be made normative for theology. It was little more than simple

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 238.

⁵⁰Glassius, op. cit., pp. 422f., 406.

application.⁵¹ It is from Scripture itself that we learn where we can take a passage in a mystical sense, the sense intended by the Holy Ghost. The brazen serpent of Numbers 21:8f. is an example: Scripture tells us in John 3:14 that it is the lifting up of Christ that is intended. The mystical sense is derived from the literal sense, not from allegory or figurative speech.⁵² Therefore Gerhard may speak of two senses of Scripture, but he does not allow for a double sense, for both are one and the same. The literal sense is the spiritual sense, mystical sense, proper sense, and sense of the Holy Ghost.

Not every New Testament citation of an Old Testament passage has the nature of a direct quotation; nor are such passages always used to prove exactly what they say. The New Testament quotes passages in various senses. Sometimes they can be harmonized with the literal sense. Sometimes they are used because of a conclusion validly drawn from the passage. Sometimes the passage is figuratively applied. A distinction must therefore be made between the literal sense itself and the use that is made of it.⁵³ An example of this distinction is found in the use of the passage, Isaiah 53:4,

⁵¹Haegglund, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵²Ibid., p. 230. The Rabbis also held this, according to Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 54.

⁵³Ibid., p. 226.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is alluded to in 1 Peter 2:24 where, allowing for the change of a word, it is the literal sense that is quoted. The same passage is quoted in Matthew 8:17, but is there applied to a conclusion validly drawn from the passage. The application differs from the meaning directly expressed by the words of the passage. But even though some passages are merely applied or accommodated in the New Testament, that sense is still intended by the Holy Ghost and is included in the sensus literalis. How far we may carry the meaning of any passage is determined by the Bible itself. Extra-Scriptural uses of passages have no authority, except insofar as they agree with Scripture.⁵⁴ Gerhard is here struggling with a matter that should be so self-evident as not to need any explanation. The procedure he attempts to define is the same as applies to any writing. It is common and correct procedure to use a quotation to prove or illustrate a point, even though the quotation used does not in so many words say what is concluded from it. If this were not the case, there would be little use for books or quotations at all.

The prophecies of the Old Testament have proved to be troublesome to Christians for a long time. Chiliasts take them literally. For Gerhard, however, the literal sense

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 231ff.

could not be limited to the external words. Hence he made no rules about whether or when prophecies should be taken literally or figuratively. The circumstances and context must determine in each case.⁵⁵

Another point should be mentioned here in connection with the literal sense. For Gerhard the Bible was historically accurate. But this did not mean that the things described in the Bible were actually as described. Among the orthodox Lutherans the non-symbolic, literalistic meaning not only did not accord with the modern, but also not with the ancient world-view. Hence they would never agree that the literal meaning of Scripture is bound to an antique world-view.⁵⁶

According to Gerhard, then, and by implication also the later orthodox dogmaticians, the regula fidei, the sensus literalis, and the sensus Spiritus sancti are identical in content, but this does not bind us to mere grammatical exegesis.

Limitations

That Scripture contains obscurities at all is an important concession for the Lutherans to have made. But

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 228.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 227: "Die 'historische Wahrheit' der Schrift bedeutet in der Schriftauslegung Gerhards nicht, dass die darin beschriebenen Tatsachen der Natur und Geschichte immer mit dem allgemeinen Weltbild und Geschichtsbild der Vernunft zusammenfallen."

obscurity is not because of Scripture itself, but because of man's blindness and infirmity, which are due to his sinful condition.⁵⁷ Despite the application of the regula fidei, there will still remain obscurities and difficulties in the Bible.

According to Aristotelian epistemology, with which Gerhard's view of interpretation was connected, it was understood that truth consisted in correspondence of the intellect and the res, or materia signata.⁵⁸ This cannot be known in itself, but requires an enlightenment of the intellect to be known. A thing has to be made known to the intellect. It cannot be grasped without some medium, though a natural one, of revelation. The mind does not determine the thing known, but is determined by it.⁵⁹ But the interpretation of the Bible is not just a matter of epistemology; it is also connected with original sin. Thus, since the mysteries of faith in Scripture are from immediate revelation of God, they exceed our sin-corrupted intellects that cannot in themselves comprehend the things of God. Divine illumination is required to understand these mysteries.⁶⁰ And this illumination comes from the word of Scripture

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 211.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 17: "Mens nostra non mensurat res, sed mensuratur a rebus."

⁶⁰ Gerhard, op. cit., p. 20.

itself, as has been pointed out above.

Gerhard therefore points out the limitations of interpretation in the following manner. Our minds are blind without the light of the Holy Ghost. To those who resist Him the Bible will remain an obscure book. Therefore we must first pray for His light.⁶¹ This light is not conferred immediately, but through the Word which is heard and meditated upon. The things necessary for salvation are set forth in the words propriis. From these light is cast on the remainder of Scripture. The regula fidei, gathered from clear Scripture passages, is the norm to which the exposition of the rest of Scripture must be conformed. If we do not thus reach the genuine sense of every passage, then it suffices if they are not interpreted contrary to the regula fidei. Any convenient solution of an obscure passage is helpful.⁶² The unclear passages can either be cleared up by following the proper means of interpretation or the

⁶¹On this subject see APPENDIX D, Dannhauer's diagram of the causes of false interpretation.

⁶²Ibid., p. 28; cf. p. 25: "Quaecunque ergo necessaria, manifesta sunt in sacris literis, ait Chrysost. hom 3 super 2 Thessal. Si quae in illis sunt obscuriora, illorum cognitio non est perinde ad salutem omnibus necessaria, ac proinde etiamsi propriam et genuinam eorum interpretationem non semper assequamur, sufficit tamen in illis interpretandis nihil proferre, quod fidei regulae adversatur. Rom. 12 v. 6. Cavendum igitur, ne in obscuriorum locorum interpretatione quicquam proferatur, quod pugnet cum constantia perpetua sententia . . ." Within these limits Gerhard would allow for open questions and exegetical differences.

regula, or they contain nothing necessary for salvation that is not clearly expressed elsewhere.⁶³

In any event, the regula fidei must be followed and not explained away or taken figuratively, even where it disagrees with reason.⁶⁴ The locus classicus of a doctrine stands, with other passages on the same subject interpreted in its light.⁶⁵ Nor may one article of faith be opposed to another, since the Holy Ghost never contradicts Himself.⁶⁶ Human reason has no jurisdiction in this field. It may not pass judgement on Scripture, saying that there is a contradiction in articles of faith.⁶⁷ If there are apparent contradictions they must stand and not be reconciled if Scripture does not reconcile them.

Further limitations on the use of the regula are brought to our attention by the objections of the Papists to its use. They insisted that if we follow the Lutheran system, then dissimilar passages are brought together at the whim of the interpreter. To this Gerhard answered that

⁶³Gerhard, Loci Theologici (ed. Cotta), II, 329: "Quae in scripturis nusquam diserte et perspicue exposita habentur, eorum cognitio non est ad salutem absolute necessaria."

⁶⁴Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 65: "Propter absurdum rationis humanae non esse discedendum a regula fidei."

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 76: "Nimirum iudicium de vera contradictione in articulis fidei non est permittendum humanae rationi, alias Scripturae Magistra statueretur, cum tamen nec voluntatis nec potestatis divinae pernoscentiae regula sit idonea."

an interpreter is required to be free from prejudices and not to infer his preconceived opinions. They also objected that the same word or phrase does not everywhere mean the same. Gerhard agreed, but said the use of the regula presupposes that passages be examined in their context. The Papists further said that some passages occur only once, and hence the analogy of Scripture does not apply. But where the words occur only once, the subject is repeated elsewhere, replied Gerhard.⁶⁸

As an example of the limitations of the regula we may take Gerhard's exposition of Psalm 2:9, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."⁶⁹ He quotes two possible interpretations. Some say that this is a reference to spiritual contrition, humiliation, and tribulation. Others say that it means that the ungodly will be cast into eternal punishment. Either of these is possible, he says, but the latter conforms better to the context. Both would be in accord with the regula fidei, but it is not the only means for deciding.

The practical purpose of obscurities was a problem for many. If God's Word is clear, then why did He allow them to be in His Word? Gerhard answers that they are present to move us to ardent prayer, excite us to careful study,

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 48ff.

⁶⁹John Gerhard, Annotationes Posthumae in Psalmos priores (Jenae: Zachariae Hertelii, 1663), p. 27.

commend us to more truth, deprive us of our arrogance and profane thinking, and move us to reverence.⁷⁰

The regula fidei does not solve all problems; but without it we cannot solve any problems.

⁷⁰Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, pp. 1f.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER AIDS FOR INTERPRETATION

Law and Gospel

If a center of Scripture must be found, then Gerhard would find it in Law and Gospel.¹ These two doctrines constitute the materia of Scripture, the two chief heads of divine revelation in Scripture.² The Law is the doctrine of works, including promises made to the obedient, and the Gospel is the doctrine of faith, including the prophecies of the Messiah's person, work, and benefits. Under these two doctrines everything in Scripture can be included.³ Even genealogies are included under Gospel to show from what line the Messiah came.⁴

The terms Law and Gospel are defined for us by David Chytraeus.⁵ The term "Law" can mean the whole of Biblical

¹Bengt Haegglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung ueber das altlutherische Schriftverstaendnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1951), p. 182.

²John Gerhard, Loci Theologici (Preuss edition; Bero-
lini: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), p. 33.

³John Gerhard, Exegesis (Jenae: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1625), p. 72.

⁴John Gerhard, Commentarius super Genesin (Jenae: Ernesti Steinmanni, 1637), p. 5.

⁵David Chytraeus, Commentarius in Matthaeum Evangelis-
tam (Vitebergae: Iohannes Crato, 1558), pp. 14-19.

teaching, including both Law and Gospel in the strict sense. The Hebrew term Torah means "teaching" and is often used in this wide sense, as in Psalms 1 and 18; and Isaiah 2 uses it in the sense of Gospel. "Law" can also refer to the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, as in Hebrews 7. Or it can refer to the books of Moses and the prophets. And finally, it refers especially to the Decalogue, or moral Law, which Christ came to fulfill. This Law was written in the hearts of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and was repeated at Sinai. This is the Law that gives life if obeyed perfectly.

The term "Gospel" (Evangelion) is taken from classical Greek, where it meant a good or pleasant announcement, an advantage gained from such an announcement, or a sacrifice offered to a god, or gains that have been received from such an announcement. In the New Testament it means the opposite of Law. Christ, the prophets, and the apostles distinguished between Law and promises. The Law is an evil message of God, or a curse, but the Gospel deals with remission of sins by the grace of God. To all who repent and believe it is the power of God, justification, and remission of sins. In the titles of the four Gospels, the term means the history of the life and teaching of Jesus.

According to Gerhard, both Law and Gospel derive from the same will of God for man, for God's justice is more than His legalism. It is the Gospel that is the chief doctrine, even in passages that speak of the Law (as in the Psalms).

But the Gospel does not cancel or abolish the Law; it depends on the Law and gives the Law its meaning.⁶ Law and Gospel are alike in that both promise eternal life. The difference lies in the fact that the promises of the Law are useless, since no one can keep it. Yet both aim at the same righteousness and the Holy Ghost works equally in both.⁷

In the Old Testament, as distinguished from the New, the Law has its force primarily as something that condemns. It forces man and produces an external righteousness. Internal righteousness does not automatically follow. The function of the Law is to produce the external works, but it does not achieve true righteousness. The New Testament does away with this forced piety and gives men righteousness by grace.⁸

There are no various species or subdivisions of Law or Gospel, but there is one and the same Law and one and the same Gospel. Thus the Old Testament promises of the person and benefits of Christ are no less Gospel than the New Testament discussions.⁹

How shall we distinguish Law and Gospel in the Bible? Chytraeus gives us six principles. They can be distinguished

⁶Haegglund, op. cit., pp. 201f.

⁷Ibid., p. 200.

⁸Ibid., p. 198.

⁹Chytraeus, op. cit., pp. 26-28.

(1) from the form of the message. The Law is revealed by nature, the Gospel by Scripture. (2) from the form of the promise. The Law's promises are conditional, the Gospel's unconditional. (3) from the threats. The Law denounces all men; the Gospel denounces none but the unbeliever. (4) from the effect. The Law is the power of sin; the Gospel the power of God to save. (5) from the object. The Law refers to the arrogant; the Gospel to the humble and contrite. (6) from the material (content). The Law consists of precepts, the Gospel of promises.¹⁰ Chytraeus adds the caution that parts of the Gospel are sometimes only improperly called "Gospel," as for instance, penitence or new obedience (good works). These can be called Gospel only in its broad definition.¹¹

Gerhard finds it necessary to add still more observations about the Law that must be noted when interpreting Scripture.¹² Whatever accuses and damns sin, he says, pertains to the Law, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New. In the New Testament the forensic and ceremonial laws are abrogated. The regenerate man is not under the curse of the Law; yet he is not free from obedience either. The

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 21-25.

¹¹Ibid., p. 29.

¹²John Gerhard, Tractatus de Legitima Scripturae Sacrae Interpretatione (Ienae: Johannis Jacobi Bauhofferi, 1663), p. 91. Hereafter to be referred to as De Legitima Interpretatione.

moral Law was not first set forth at Sinai, but in Adam and Eve before the Fall. The rule of obedience in all laws is to love God with the whole heart; negatively stated, it is not to lust. The promises and threats of the Law are to be understood with the condition of obedience; the promises with the condition of perfect obedience, and the threats with the condition of repentance. The promises given to the pious for this life are also to be understood with a limitation: they also have crosses to bear.

An example of the application of the distinction between Law and Gospel may be found in Calov's discussion of Old Testament sacrifice. The Socinians doubted that they really expiated for sins. Calov answers that they did, because it is false that God was only propitiated by the external observance of sacrifices. It is not our obedience, but Christ's that justifies (Romans 5:19). It was not the observance of sacrifices that obtained remission of sins, but faith in the Messiah (Acts 15:11; Romans 3:25; 4:6; Ephesians 1:7).¹³ If one looks at the Old Testament sacrifices from the standpoint of Law, then one sees them only as the Socinians did, as mere signs that signified the forgiveness of sins, and not as prophetic sacrifices that offered and gave forgiveness of sins by virtue of the Sacrifice which they foreshadowed.

¹³Abraham Calov, Socinismus Profligatus (Wittenbergae: Joh. Borckard, 1668), pp. 604-606.

Specific examples of the application of the distinction between Law and Gospel are not frequent in the commentaries of the orthodox Lutherans as long as we look for the terms "Law" and "Gospel." But the principle is in practice throughout the commentaries, as in the above example. The reason for lack of reference to it may be found in the fact that it was rarely, if ever, challenged as a principle. It was only confounded in the exposition of particular texts. The answers the Lutherans gave were then couched in terms of the objections raised, again as in the above illustration.

Summae

The charge has been laid against the orthodox Lutherans that they had no sense of history. Diestel¹⁴ complains that August Pfeiffer tried to demonstrate the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession from Genesis.¹⁵ Diestel thinks that this is evidence of a bizarre combination and an unhistorical sense in orthodoxy. Gass complains that the peculiarities of the Old Testament faith were not taken into account, except by Calixt and a few of the Reformed teachers. He says that Calov assumed too many dogmatic distinctions in Scripture, and that he found the Trinity in Job 26:13 and then

¹⁴Ludwig Diestel, Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche (Jena: Mauke's Verlag, 1869), p. 477.

¹⁵Ibid. He refers to August Pfeiffer, Pansophia Mosaeica e Genesi Delineata (Leipsic: n. p., 1685).

took Grotius to task for not finding immortality or resurrection in the Old Testament.¹⁶ Are these charges against the Lutherans justified? Let us examine the evidence.

The reason for the introduction of dogmatic rules, or summae, into the study of Scripture is that Scripture may be made clear. Passages will often conflict with one another when we apply them to the wrong frame of reference. Gerhard says that when a passage is obscure because of the subject, then Scriptural axioms will often help resolve it.¹⁷ Two such axioms are: works of the Trinity ad extra are indivisible; properties of one nature become common to the person (of Christ). Calvin had commented on Matthew 22:43ff., where Psalm 2 is quoted ("The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit thou at my right hand.'"), that David calls Christ Lord according to the divine nature, which sat at the right hand of God. But Gerhard responds that Christ is Lord according to both natures personally, or according to the personal union. Therefore this is not a case of Lord speaking to Lord, for He was able to receive glory only according to the human nature, which was raised to session at God's right hand.¹⁸ Although it may be questioned that the Old Testament

¹⁶W. Gass, Geschichte der Protestantischen Dogmatik in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Theologie ueberhaupt (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1854), I, 166.

¹⁷Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, (p. 90.

¹⁸John Gerhard, Annotationes Posthumae in Evangelium D. Matthaei (Jena: Georgi Sengewaldi, 1663), p. 977.

faithful made this distinction, we can see why it was necessary for Gerhard to make it here. Calvin had tried to prove something from the verse that was not in it.

On the sixth verse of the same Psalm ("Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."), Gerhard finds it necessary to refer to the eternity of God, before whom there is no time. He quotes Augustine, who said that "today" signifies the present. In eternity there is no preterite or future whatever, for what is eternal always is. "Today have I begotten thee" is taken to predicate the eternal generation of the Son.¹⁹

If the charge is to be laid against the Lutherans that they read things into the Old Testament, then the same charge must be levelled at Scripture itself. Among the proofs for the Trinity in the Old Testament, Gerhard includes the necessity of this doctrine for salvation and the divine prohibition of Psalm 81:10. The New Testament would be introducing a new or strange god if the Trinity were not taught, albeit in a less clear manner, in the Old Testament.²⁰

Other doctrines will fall by the wayside if proper distinctions and Scriptural axioms are not allowed to be applied where necessary. Such an axiom is the doctrine of original sin. Teachers like Hackspann, Calixt, Romanists,

¹⁹John Gerhard, Annotationes Posthuma in Psalmos priores (Jenae: Zachariae Hertelii, 1663), p. 26.

²⁰Gerhard, Exegesis, p. 931.

the Arminians, Socinians, and others held that Genesis 5:24 (the translation of Enoch) taught that man can satisfy the divine Law. Calov answered that the cause of Enoch's translation was not in his generation, but in his regeneration; not holiness of life, but faith, as Hebrews 11:5 tells us.²¹

Another typical example is Calov's treatment of James 2:23, where many commentators have again tried to introduce works as a cause of salvation. Calov objects that works are the fruit of faith, not a cause of salvation, as even James shows. He points out that James is quoting Genesis 15:6 here, even though he has just spoken of the sacrifice of Isaac. The latter is merely exemplified as the consequence of and testimony to Abraham's faith. James does not treat of Abraham's justification before God, but the demonstration before men.²²

The most important axiom of all is that there is no salvation except by faith in Christ. Not only is this a Scriptural axiom, but if it falls, then the whole Christian faith will fall with it. The Socinians had said that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in God, but not faith in Christ. Calov strenuously objected. He said that it is false that faith in the Messiah was not required in the Old Testament. He appeals to several passages like Isaiah 53:11

²¹Abraham Calov, Commentarius in Genesin (Wittebergae: Michaelis Meyeri, 1671), pp. 616f.

²²Ibid., pp. 850, 855.

and Romans 3:21. He says that if the means of salvation is different, then no apostle can prove our justification from the Old Testament. The witness of the New Testament (Hebrews 11, Romans 4, Galatians 3) tells us that Christ is the only way of salvation.²³

The Lutherans were not saying any more than Scripture itself says. Practically every argument they employ is taken directly from Scripture. It is true that not every distinction they pointed out necessarily occurred to the readers and writers of the Old Testament, that their knowledge of some doctrines was more obscure than ours is, but this does not mean that they were entirely ignorant of the doctrines or distinctions.

The distinctions and Scriptural axioms must be maintained on the one hand over against those who try to prove from a text something that is not found in it, and on the other hand over against those who without proof assert that the Old Testament saints knew nothing of Christian doctrine. To put it more bluntly, one must attribute to the Jews a colossal ignorance of anything spiritual if he intends to maintain the invalidity of these axioms. These axioms are drawn from Scripture, some of them even from the Old Testament. How they are drawn will next occupy our attention.

²³Calov, Socinismus Profligatus, pp. 701-703.

Logical Inferences

Gerhard recommends to us his four-volume commentary on the whole Bible which contains, among other things, doctrines and observations not immediately evident.²⁴ Is this legitimate? Does it not contradict the doctrine of the perspicuity of the Bible? The Lutherans held that it did not, since people constantly say things that have implications not always evident in the words, or at least not immediately evident.

The Socinians held the opposite view, saying that Scripture must contain the things necessary for salvation expressly (ῥητῶς).²⁵ Whatever is not so stated is not necessary to be known for salvation, even if it can be shown by legitimate logical demonstration. Calov insisted that such an extreme position is not necessary. If it is plain and clear, why should God have to say it expressly? And does not Scripture itself use deductions from other passages of Scripture? In Mark 12:26 Jesus claims that "Moses said," but what does He mean except the consequences of what Moses said? If we insist on the position the Socinians held, the

²⁴John Gerhard, Methodus Studii Theologici (Lipsiae: Johann Glueck, 1617), p. 159.

²⁵Calov, op. cit., p. 70: ". . . quicquid non exprimitur ῥητῶς in S. literis, id ad salutem cognitu necessarium esse inficiantur, etiamsi per legitimam consequentiam e Scripturis demonstratur."

apostles become ridiculous when they prove things from the Old Testament, for hardly a single article of the Christian religion is found expressly stated in the Old Testament. So even Christ argues wrongly against the Sadducees. If legitimate inferences are disallowed, then Christians cannot be sure the Jesus is the Messiah. What assurance is there of anything that treats of grace or faith? Scripture does not literally say that God wishes to forgive my sins, or for me to receive grace and eternal salvation. These conclusions are gathered from the general Gospel promises. Besides, even the Socinians have dogmatics, in which they speak words and deductions not found expressly in the Bible.²⁶

Calov says later that the words of Scripture are to be taken according to the underlying content, i. e., that sense which the context allows, and which does not contradict the analogy of faith, for the words are not used outside the context of the analogy of faith.²⁷

Calov will even admit of using figures of speech or parables to prove certain doctrines. At first sight this seems like a contradiction of the cardinal principle that doctrines can only be derived from the sensus literalis.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 70-73.

²⁷Ibid., p. 99: "Verba enim accipienda sunt secundum substratum materiam, vel eo sensu, quem contextus admittit, nec reprobatur analogia fidei."

Richard, *On Justifying Interpretations*, p. 57.

But if we look at his reasons for saying this, we find that it is legitimate. Scripture itself uses figures of speech to teach certain doctrines like the session of Christ at the right hand of the Father. An extraordinary amount of the material in Scripture is figurative, especially the discourses of Christ, which we can by no means discard. Christ did not use figurative language to obscure matters, but to inform people. The figures and parables were used for greater clarity. If, as St. Paul says, all Scripture is useful for doctrine, reproof, etc., then also the figures and parables of the Bible are useful. And finally, Christ and the apostles concluded doctrines from symbols, figures, and parables in the Old Testament, as well as types (John 3:15; Matthew 22:29). Of course there are certain limitations on their use. We obviously cannot use them if they are obscure or if the purpose of the figure or parable is dubious. Nor can we use anything that is beside the point of the parable. So it is not only acceptable, but even desirable and necessary to use figures and parables as sources and supports of doctrines.²⁸ Of course, allegory is entirely inadmissible, unless Scripture itself so employs it.²⁹ This was the error of Roman exegesis. A passage may have implications that should be noted, but it has only one intended sense.

²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

²⁹Gerhard, De Legitima Interpretatione, p. 57.

Errors therefore arise in many cases not from Scripture itself, but from the faulty logic by which conclusions are drawn from it. The conclusions must be valid ones. If the truth of Scripture rests on only probably arguments, then nothing is certain. If men resist the obvious consequences, it is not because they are not certain that it is the Word of God, but because they are malicious men.³⁰

If we look at some specific examples of logical inference as they are employed by the orthodox Lutherans in interpreting Scripture, we shall better be able to pass judgment on the validity of this method.

Gerhard, in dealing with the subject of the Trinity in the Old Testament, says³¹ that whoever acknowledges the Messiah to be true and eternal God, to be a person before His nativity from eternity, to be a distinct person from the Father, and to be Him upon whom the Holy Ghost is to come, also acknowledges the plurality of persons in one divine essence. If one grants each of these propositions to be true, then one cannot escape the conclusion. Whether Gerhard has proved each of the propositions is another question that would take us too far afield at the present. The reader is referred to the later chapters on this question.

A more obvious illustration can be found in Gerhard's

³⁰Calov, op. cit., p. 59.

³¹Gerhard, Exegesis, pp. 1084f.

observations derived from Genesis 1:1. He notices that this passage shows that the world is not eternal, but dates from a certain time; that it began to exist at that certain time; that only God is eternal; and that we must not love the world nor rest our hearts in it.³² Hardly anyone would deny that the verse proves these propositions (except perhaps the last), providing he takes the verse at its face-value.

Another illustration is in his comment on Romans 3:21,

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law and the prophets, although the Law and the prophets bear witness to it.

Here the word "manifested" indicates three things. First, righteousness is a mystery to human reason. Second, it was present in the Old Testament, but manifested in the New, for if it was not present in the Old, it cannot be said to be manifested (so Augustine). And third, the light of doctrine is greater in the New Testament.³³ As far as their logic is concerned, the inferences are valid, and we must agree that the verse indeed says these things.

A more complex example of the same procedure is evident in Gerhard's exposition of Romans 4:6, where the apostle quotes Psalm 32:1:

So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to

³²Gerhard, Commentarius super Genesin, p. 8.

³³John Gerhard, Adnotationes ad Priora capita epistola D. Pauli ad Romanos (Jenae: Christiani von Saher, 1645), pp. 105f.

when God reckons righteousness apart from works:
 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven,
 and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against
 whom the Lord will not reckon his sin.'

Gerhard observes that the apostle argues that whatever is the makarismos of a man, that is also his justification. Since "blessing" and "righteousness" are of equal force in this passage, it shows that there is but one cause of justification and salvation. The Papists argued that the righteousness of the Christian is here meant, but Gerhard answered: Man must be wholly righteous before God, but our righteousness is imperfect; Paul says righteousness is imputed to us, but inherent righteousness is infused. Romans 10 tells us that righteousness comes from God by grace. It is not manifested by the Law (Romans 3:21). It inheres in Christ, not in us; it is imputed to us. Righteousness is defined as forgiveness of sins, but this definition does not fit inherent righteousness. And finally, our righteousness is not by works. Therefore this passage does not refer to our inherent righteousness, but to the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us.³⁴ The reader may judge for himself the validity of Gerhard's treatment of the passage.

In this same connection we may make reference to the orthodox Lutheran view of the vowel points, which is often pointed to as a ludicrous extreme, indicative of a narrow

³⁴Ibid., pp. 132f.

view of inspiration. Dannhauer³⁵ says that the vowel points were necessary. They may have been missing formally, but they were necessary virtually, i. e., they had to be understood. Just as SPQR of INRI signified also the vowels of the words, so did the Hebrew consonants signify also the vowels. Because they were formally missing, the Septuagint erred in many places.

On the whole question of valid conclusions a word of caution must be added. The Lutherans insisted that Scripture must be read with captive intellect, for the words of God often seem absurd and incongruous to our intellect.³⁶ We dare not draw conclusions that are contrary to the regula fidei or deny mysteries of faith simply because they are not logical. The use of reason is ministerial, not magisterial.

³⁵Johann Conrad Dannhauer, Hermeneutica Sacra (Argentorati: Josiae Staedelii, 1654), p. 16.

³⁶Gerhard, Methodus Studii Theologici, p. 144.

Ernst Haeckel, Die Heilige Schrift und ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: eine Untersuchung über die lutherische Schriftverständnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1931), pp. 200-205.

³⁷Ibid., p. 197.

CHAPTER V

MESSIANIC PROPHECY

General Principles

Lutheran orthodoxy did not deny that there is a difference between the Old and the New Testament. But neither did it fix so great a gulf between them as has been fixed by the modern critics of the Old Testament. The position of orthodoxy is epitomized by the old couplet:

Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet,
Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet.

This, of course, requires some explanation. For Gerhard the difference between the Old and the New Testament lay mainly in the fact that we of the New Testament era are no longer under the yoke of the Law. The Law has been fulfilled in Christ. He was revealed in the New Testament, not for the first time, but in a new form: in the flesh. What was once promised has been made apparent.¹ The New Testament reveals the same teachings as the Old, but more clearly.²

The emphasis was not on the differences, however, but on the similarities of the Testaments. This is to be

¹Bengt Haegglund, Die Heilige Schrift und Ihre Deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards: Eine Untersuchung ueber das altlutherische Schriftverstaendnis (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1951), pp. 204-206.

²Ibid., p. 197.

expected, since both are the Word of God. The Old Testament is not just past history, but still the living Word of God, containing the whole truth of faith. The Old Testament people were a Christian Church, for they believed in the same Christ the New Testament Church worships. They were justified by virtue of the same vicarious satisfaction and received justification by faith in the Messiah. In one case it was the promised Messiah, in the other the apparent Messiah Who was the object of faith. It is the same God Who is revealed in either case.³ Christ did not preach a new message that had never before been known, but the same message that the prophets had preached. What made the New Testament new was not the content, but the fulfillment of the prophecy, the appearance of Christ in the flesh.⁴ The unity of the Testaments did not lie only in types, but essentially in the presence of direct evangelical promises in the Old Testament. Were it not for these promises, there would be no unity between the Testaments.⁵

It would have been folly for the Lutherans to insist on maintaining an equal clarity of knowledge in the Old Testament, contrary to 1 Peter 1:10f., where the prophets are

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 204.

⁵Ibid., p. 197.

said to have enquired earnestly about the person and the time they foretold. The Lutherans did not make such an error. Dannhauer points out that the Church, having the Spirit, enlightens the spiritually dull mind. Somethings are first expounded in the New Testament.⁶ The prophets did not always know all about what they prophesied. Prophecy can sometimes be without the knowledge of the prophet. Balaam's ass and Caiaphas are examples.⁷ Gerhard also shows that Paul applies the same mode of justification to the Old Testament Jews and the New Testament Gentiles, but he does so from a consideration of the circumstances of the time (Romans 4:9).⁸ We should be careful to note, however, that the circumstances of the times do not mean that the Old Testament believers had a confused knowledge. According to Diestel, Calov harshly reprimanded Theodor Hackspann for saying that their knowledge was only a confusa Christi cognitio.⁹ The Old

⁶Johann Conrad Dannhauer, Hermeneutica Sacra (Argentorati: Josiae Staedellii, 1654), p. 36.

⁷Ibid., p. 28.

⁸John Gerhard, Adnotationes ad Priora capita epistolae D. Pauli ad Romanos (Jenae: Christiani von Saher, 1645), pp. 136ff.

⁹Ludwig Diestel, Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche (Jena: Mauke's Verlag, 1869), p. 402. But Johann Andrea Quenstedt, Theologia Didacto-Polemica sive Systema Theologicorum (VWittebergae: Matthaei Henckelii, 1685), p. 246 is willing to admit that a confusa cognitio can still be saving faith. "Fides implicita non sufficit ad salutem. . . . Notitiam explicitam . . . complectitur 1. cognitionem confusam, 2. distinctam, 3. magis distinctam, quae gradualem differentiam notant."

Diessel unfortunately does not cite the reference to the quotation from Calov, but the same conclusion may be inferred from elsewhere in Calov's writings. In his Systematis Locorum Theologicorum (Witebergae: Christiani Schroedteri, 1777), X, 301 he says, "Fides justificans est doctrinae salvificae e sacris literis rite cognitae, solidoque assensu approbatae; fiducialis et individualis applicatio." He approvingly quotes Luther on the antediluvian Church (Ibid., VIII, 11): "So is auch Gottes Wort noch Weise nicht/ dass sein euserliches Wort/ (wo dies ist) solle vergeblich geredet/ und von niemande verstanden werden/ wie Er spricht Es. 55. Mein Wort soll nicht leer wieder zu mir kommen/ sondern ausrichten/ darzu ichs sende. Nun waren hier allein zwey Menschen/ Adam und Eva/ die es verstehen kunten/ darumb haben sie es muessen fruchtbarlich/ seliglich/ und recht verstanden haben/ aller Ding/ wie wir Christen/ und zuvor all Propheten/ verstanden haben." And Calov himself later comments, VIII, 25, "Cognitionem Dei habebant; Deum Patrum agnoscebant; Filium; Sanctus S.; Deum absolvere a peccato intelligebant." Gerhard also rejects a cognitio confusa, Loci Theologici (editio Preussi; Berolini: Gust. Schlawitz, 1866), V, 384: "Distinguendum inter cognitionem confusam, rudimentariam et inchoatam, ac inter cognitionem distinctam, perfectam et exquisitam; item inter Scripturam acceptam materialiter pro verbo Dei in Scripturas redacta, et formaliter pro apicibus literarum et compage illa librorum canonicorum, in quibus continetur Dei verbum. Ex testimonio ecclesiae cognosci primum potest, quae sit vera Scriptura et quis verus Scripturae sensus, scilicet cognitione confusa, rudimentaria et inchoata; sed distincta et scientifica hujus rei cognitio non pendet ex testimonio ecclesiae externo, sed ex internis $\kappa\epsilon\iota\tau\eta\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ et ex $\pi\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\mu\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$ doctrinae et interpretationis cum Scripturis sacris. Testimonio ecclesiae permoveri quidem homines possunt, et credant, hos libros esse divinos et canonicos, sed ad hanc confusam notitiam et ad hoc fidei principium, ut scilicet Scriptura ipsa in manus sumitur, legatur et evolvatur, tunc enim Spiritus s. verbis suis testimonium reddit ac mentem legentis de veritate convincit. . . . Possumus quidem cognitione incerta, obscura et dubia suspicari"

Probably both sides were saying the same thing in different terms, and both meant that any faith must take some shape. It is not possible to give the name "faith" to that which believes "what the Church believes," "what the Bible says," or even "what God promises," without knowing the content thereof, albeit incompletely. Joh. Guilielmus Baierus, Compendium Theologiae Positivae (editio Waltheri; Sancti Ludovici: Luth. Concordia Verlag, 1879), III, 136: "Credere enim non possumus, nisi quae mente apprehendimus aut apprehensione simplici cognovimus." Quenstedt, op. cit., p. 246: "Fides ejusmodi implicita nominatenus tantum fides est, re ipsa pura, puta rerum, credendarum ignorantia, quum nihil aliud credat, quam quod credit Ecclesia, quid autem Ecclesia credat, ignorat."

Testament prophecies were clear in themselves, so that the Evangelists could expound them historically, yet more clearly.¹⁰ Also Gerhard deplores the confusion of the Socinians, who confounded the distinction between obscure and clear

Gerhard, *op. cit.*, III, 56: "(Bellarminus ait) 5. Apprehensio non est fides, sed aliquid fidei praecedens. Possunt enim etiam infideles apprehendere mysteria fidei. Respondemus: vitiosa collectio. Apprehensio sine assensu non est fides. Ergo ad fidem non pertinet apprehensio; imo vero id ex eo sequitur, quod fides non sit nuda apprehensio sive notitia, sed insuper etiam assensus, cui nos insuper addimus fiduciam. 6. Apprehensio proprie non dicitur notitia, si sit rudus et confusa, qualis ad fidem sufficit. Respondemus: Concedimus, esse gradus notitiae, interim non est fides, licet sit tenuis et languida, quae non aliquam requirat notitiam, assensus enim necessario praerequirit notitiam, cum non possimus nisi rei cognitae assensum praebere." Such a cognitio confusa was also known as fides implicita, and was rejected by all the Lutherans, e. g., Calov, *op. cit.*, X, 304.

What Quenstedt seems to have had in mind, therefore, was a knowledge like our knowledge of the Last Things, which has some confused elements, but is nevertheless the basis of our faith in our final deliverance and reward. Quenstedt and Calov, then, did not disagree in substance, but only in choice of terms.

Under no circumstances, however, was it granted that Scripture does not contain the articles of faith, or that it contains them only germinally or implicitly. Quenstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 102, on the question of whether Scripture contains everything necessary for Christian faith and life: "Non est quaestio . . . III. Non de perfectione implicita, quod scil. Scriptura contineat omnia velut in radice, in semine, et in principio universali, sed de tali perfectione, qua S. Scriptura omnia necessaria sufficienter, immediate, explicite et aedequate contineat in se, non ostendat extra se." *Ibid.*, p. 117: "Articuli enim fidei et praecepta morum in propriis suis sedibus non obscuris, aut ambiguis, sed perspicuis, propriis, et ab omni ambiguitate alienis verbis in Scriptura proponuntur, ut quilibet sedulus Scripturae lector, qui devote et pie Scripturam legit, ea possit intelligere."

¹⁰Abraham Calov, Biblia Illustrata (Dresdae et Lipsiae: Johannis Christophori Zimmermanni, 1719), p. 2.

knowledge.¹¹ Probably the line between an obscure knowledge, which the Lutherans ascribed to the Old Testament saints, and a confused knowldge, which they rejected, will escape the modern reader. What seems to be meant is that the Old Testament saints know of the person, work, and benefits of the Messiah, but they did not know who or when He was to be. But what is not meant by the Lutherans is that the saints did not know of the Messiah. That they rejected this position is indicated by the fact that Glassius was able to write a Christologia Mosaica.¹²

The orthodox Lutherans insisted that the Old Testament is sufficient to convince the Jews. Calov argues this point against the Socinians,¹³ who granted that it is useful in part. He says that nothing else is useful, since the Jews do not accept the New Testament. Nor will the divine works or nature of Christ convince them, since they deny these. But it can be shown that Christ left the Old Testament inviolate. This is proof for them. Calov then goes on to argue that it is false to say the Old Testament must be taken differently than it is used in the New Testament. Many prophecies can be understood in the literal sense from the Old

¹¹John Gerhard, Exegesis (Jenae: Tobias Steinhart, 1625), Antitheses contra Socinianos, qui confundunt distinctionem inter cognitio obscuram et claram, illam docemus."

¹²Diestel, op. cit., p. 477.

¹³Abraham Calov, Socinismus Profligatus (Wittenbergae: Joh. Borckard, 1668), pp. 82f.

Testament itself. From these the Jews can be convinced concerning faith in Christ. Furthermore, he says, it can be shown from the Old Testament that there is no other Messiah than Jesus, for this is exactly what Jesus and the apostles did. In fact, it is blasphemous to say the Old Testament cannot convince the Jews, or can convince them only in part. 2 Peter 1:19 says just the opposite, and so does 2 Timothy 3:16, where it is able to inform one sufficiently to produce saving faith. And finally, he argues, why do the Socinians themselves dispute with the Jews if their own Scripture cannot convince them?

Again Gerhard agrees. In his comments on Matthew 22:43f., where Christ quotes Psalm 110 as proof of His divinity, Gerhard remarks that Christ does not argue with the appellation "Son of David," but the Pharisees should have understood that Christ was both God and man.¹⁴

Gerhard noted several types of fulfilment of prophecy. In his commentary on Matthew¹⁵ he follows Chemnitz in saying that there are four types. (1) What is simply and precisely understood in the prophecy, as in Matthew 1:22f. (Isaiah 7:14). (2) When the fulfilment is similar and related to the subject of the prophecy, like Matthew 2:17 (Jeremiah 31:15).

¹⁴John Gerhard, Adnotationes Posthumae in Evangelium D. Matthaei (Jena: Geor. Sengewaldi, 1663), p. 976. Hereafter to be referred to simply as Adnotationes in Mattheum.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 127.

(3) When a prophecy is general and can be applied to any similar example, like Matthew 15:7; 13:14; Romans 11:8. (4) When a prophecy is fulfilled in the members and the head, or the type and the antitype, as in Matthew 2:15 (Hosea 11:1). These four types may be called univocal, analogical, specific, and typical or mystical.

Gerhard's sermons reveal an even broader idea of prophecy, as he employs other classifications. Something in the Old Testament may simply be asserted to be a prophecy of Christ and His kingdom, or an example for Christians. Sometimes a work of Christ is asserted to have redemptive or substitutionary meaning for Christians. Gerhard also applied the allegorical, typological, and spiritual (application) methods of exposition in his preaching.¹⁶ Of course allegory and application had no value for adding to knowledge, and so were not needed for theology, but were merely useful devices for instruction.¹⁷

Lutheran orthodoxy, then, considered Messianic prophecy to be self-evident in the Old Testament. One did not need to go looking for it. If anyone failed to see it, it was only because of the blindness of his own heart. The two testaments were not simply equated, but separated by the manifestation of the Messiah in the flesh.

¹⁶Haegglund, op. cit., p. 237, footnote 92.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 232.

Rectilinear Prophecy

Since Christ is the end of the Law, the heart of the prophets, and the center of the Gospel, it is self-understood that He is also the aim of interpretation. This attitude, says Diestel, resulted in finding Christ everywhere in the Old Testament by applying typology to the Law and Christology to the prophets.¹⁸ It was considered better to find Christ there too often than too seldom.¹⁹ Only two methods were generally applied: direct, rectilinear prophecy, and typology. Allegory was also used, but since it was not valid for dogmatics, its value was primarily for teaching and preaching.

The Lutherans could hardly understand how anyone could fail to see direct Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. The Church had always seen them. They play an important role in the New Testament. The fathers saw them. Luther saw them. Even the Rabbis saw them, and in many places also the Targums.²⁰ In commenting on Genesis 1:2, Calov says that the

¹⁸Diestel, op. cit., p. 369: "Christus ist, als finis legis, prophetarum nucleus, evangelii centrum, weniger das Heilsprinzip als scopus interpretandi. Die Ausfuehrung dieses Gedankens richtet sich vorzueglich auf das Alte Testament und enthaelt die Weisung, ueberall Christum zu finden: sie laeft auf die durchgaengige Typisierung des Gesetzes und Christologisierung der Prophetie hinaus."

¹⁹Ibid., p. 374.

²⁰John Gerhard, Commentarius super Deuteronomium (Jenae: Joh. Ludovici Neuenhanii, 1657), p. 1108.

Trinity is taught in this verse because ruach cannot be taken as impersonal. He appeals to the Moslems, who recognized this fact, even though they called it a corruption.²¹ It is taken for granted that Christian teachings are found in the Old Testament. In many places the proofs for the Messianic import of a passage includes the testimony of the ancient or recent Rabbis.²² Yet even Diestel, who is ordinarily critical of Calov, is forced to say that he did not go nearly as far as the tradition he sought to uphold.²³

It was the contention of Faustus Socinus that the New Testament authors accommodated themselves to the spirit and mental ability of the times. He even says they may have misquoted at times.²⁴ It was the contention of the Lutherans that this was not the case, that the New Testament writers found nothing more than the Old Testament actually contained. They appealed sometimes to the regula fidei, but even more often to the literal meaning of the words of the Old Testament.

²¹Abraham Calov, Commentarius in Genesin (Wittebergae: Michaelis Meyeri, 1671), p. 148.

²²John Gerhard, Annotationes Posthuma in Psalmos priores (Jenae: Zachariae Hertelii, 1663), p. 23.

²³Diestel, op. cit., p. 403: ". . . er in dieser Christologisierung des A. T. nicht ganz so weit geht als die bisherige Tradition, welche er im Allgemeinen mit aller Harte und grossem Eifer zu stuetzen sucht."

²⁴Ibid., p. 391.

In the area of Messianic prophecy the orthodox Lutherans did not waste much space laying down principles whereby the prophecies are to be interpreted. This is perfectly consistent with their position. They believed that the interpreter had only to point to the passage and show that the words must refer to the promised Messiah. Therefore it would be profitable to review how they approached some of the key passages and see how much they derived from the passages and by what methods.

The second Psalm is treated as Messianic in the New Testament and also by the Lutherans. Hebrews 1:5 quotes verse 7, which, says Gerhard, deals with Christ in the literal sense.²⁵ The objection posed by the Jansenists and others is that the passage deals with David. But Gerhard disagreed. He says that the scope and argument of the Psalm treats of a person and his prophetic-royal office and his fortunes in this world. The nations do not conspire against David, but against the Messiah. Not David, but Christ is described in the Old Testament as king of Zion (Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 110:2; 14:7; Isaiah 52:7; 59:20; et al.). The promise of inheriting the whole earth is made to Christ, not to David (Psalm 8:7; 72:5; Isaiah 49:6). No man, not even David, has the power of life and death described in verse 11.

²⁵John Gerhard, Commentarius super epistolam ad Hebraeos (Jenae: Christiani Guth, 1661), p. 29.

Much less can trust in David be meant in the last verse.²⁶ There is no salvation in believing in David. Furthermore, David was not the natural essential Son of God; nor was his inheritance to the end of the world.²⁷

Calvin had said that this Psalm deals not literally with Christ, but typically. Gerhard insisted that it deals literally, immediately, and directly with Christ and His rule. His reason is the testimony of the apostles. If the Psalm is accommodated in a mystic or typical sense, then the apostles could not use it for proof, since the Jews would not have accepted that sense. The Jews did, however, accept it as Messianic, as Rabbis Salomon, Ibn Ezra, and Kimchi testify.²⁸

Other possibilities existed. Some said that verse 7 speaks of the temporal generation of Christ, but Gerhard hardly finds this to be apt. Others say it deals with the resurrection, but Gerhard answered that the entire Psalm treats of Christ's mission in the flesh. Augustine was correct when he said this passage dealt with the eternal generation of the Son, for "today" before God means "always."²⁹

²⁶Gerhard, Exegesis, pp. 1095f.

²⁷Gerhard, Annotationes Posthuma in Psalmos priores, p. 21.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 21f.

²⁹Gerhard, Commentarius super epistolam ad Ebraeos, p. 29.

While Gerhard considers the New Testament testimony the last word in the interpretation of the passage, he does not use it to find the content. That is derived directly from the Psalm itself.

Another passage that was considered a locus classicus for Messianic prophecy is Isaiah 7:14, which is quoted in Matthew 1:23. Gerhard, in his commentary on Matthew,³⁰ first of all tries to determine what the prophecy meant for Ahaz, to whom it was first uttered. He reminds us that some basic considerations must be kept in mind. Frequently the prophets jump from the figure to the thing it signifies. The preservation of the state of Israel belongs to Messianic prophecies, for the Messiah was to come from the family of David. And this sign is a sign of God, who is faithful to keep His promises; hence it is no less certain than if the thing promised were itself present. Apparently Gerhard assumes that Ahaz knew these things. The passage then meant to Ahaz that before he and the line of David are exterminated, a virgin from the king's own blood will bring forth his son, Immanuel.

Gerhard then goes into the meanings of the various words used in the text, so as to ascertain whether it is indeed Messianic in the literal sense. He notes that the word "virgin" is preceded both in the Greek and in the Hebrew by

³⁰Gerhard, Annotaciones in Mattheum, pp. 86ff.

the article. This gives it emphasis. It refers to a specific, special virgin. He also notes that the Hebrew word properly means "an adolescent (girl)," and that it is not the common Hebrew word for "virgin." But usage, he says, determines the meaning, and the word in the text is used seven times in Scripture, in each case referring to an unimpaired virgin. On the basis of textual evidence he rejects a present tense for "conceive," but notes that the Hebrew verb could denote a present tense. The word for "sign" is used in Scripture to signify a miracle. Therefore the prophecy must be taken as future. The name Immanuel of course does not refer to the name Christ received at His circumcision, but to the thing that is to be predicated of Him. "This word most beautifully expresses His person, office, and benefits. It expresses the personal unity of God with man, His human nature consorting with us and His divine nature consorting with God. 'God with us' refers to the reconciliation of God to us and us to God, through His fighting for us with power. Thus the name agrees completely with 'Jesus,' Savior. For none but He who is God and man can gain salvation from sin for us."³¹

Hardly anyone would deny that Matthew understood the passage in such a way, but one might not agree that Ahaz would have so understood it. Perhaps Gerhard is assuming

³¹Ibid., pp. 85-88.

that he knew more than he did, perhaps not. We can more easily judge if we examine the treatment of some other Messianic prophecies.

Genesis 3:15 has for centuries been considered the Prot-evangel, also by the Lutherans. There are many problems that have been posed in the interpretation of this verse. The orthodox Lutherans dealt with most of them. First of all is the problem of the serpent. Was it the same kind of serpent that is known today? Why was the serpent punished? Gerhard asserts that the serpent was the same kind that is known today, but with some differences. At first it was beautiful, blessed, and amiable to man and beast. It walked upright on legs and ate fruit like the other animals. After the Fall it became abominable and horrid to every man and beast, crawling on its belly in the dust.³² The serpent was cursed for several reasons. For one, it had been such an effective instrument of temptation precisely because of its familiarity to man, so God made it an abomination.³³ The serpent was not punished because it sinned, for there was no law given to the brutes and they therefore do not bear guilt,³⁴ but it was punished to indicate the seriousness of sin and

³²John Gerhard, Commentarius super Genesin (Jenae: Ernesti Steinmanni, 1637), p. 102.

³³Ibid., p. 106.

³⁴Ibid., p. 450. The Socinians actually attributed sin to the serpent.

the severity of the divine wrath against sin. The serpent was forever to remain a symbol and memorial of the Fall, of original sin, and of the divine wrath. Just as we know the serpent's form to be abominable, we should also think on the pestilent nature of sin and on the severe judgment of God.³⁵

But this does not mean that the "enmity" placed between Eve and the serpent is to be understood only of the revulsion of men for serpents, for then only the organ of sin would be punished, and not its principal author. Then nothing would be accomplished by the prophecy. Calov says that verse 15 contains another curse,³⁶ and Gerhard maintains that there was an enmity established between men and serpents, but it was not of the same hostile, implacable kind. The insertion of the copulative particle, he goes on, both distinguishes and emphasizes the one who spoke through the serpent.³⁷ It must pertain to the infernal serpent. If we grant, ahead of the argument, that the seed of the woman is Christ, then the opposition between seed and serpent demands that it represent the author of the temptation.³⁸

But if the serpent in verse 15 is the Devil, then who is his seed? Calov answers that the Devil obviously does not

³⁵Ibid., p. 451.

³⁶Calov, Commentarius in Genesin, p. 400.

³⁷Gerhard, Commentarius super Genesin, p. 106.

³⁸Ibid., p. 102.

have offspring by natural generation. But he does have imitators of his apostasy. This does not mean the reprobate. Christ did not oppose the reprobate, for He died for them. If this passage did mean the reprobate, there would be no comfort in the passage. Eve's own seed would be opposed to itself. God did not place enmity between the elect and the reprobate. The seed of the serpent, therefore, can only mean the Devil's host of angels, who are of the same substance with him and one with him in apostasy.³⁹ They are specially mentioned here to show that Christ was to conquer all the devils at once.⁴⁰

The woman's seed does not refer to all men descended from Eve. Nor does it mean, as Calvin supposed, that it has to do with all the faithful who battle Satan's hordes, or the Church. For then only the heel, and not the head (viz., Christ) would be crushed. The Head would still be whole. Thus Christ would not have suffered and been afflicted, but only the Church, and the Devil would then prevail. Nor would the heel rise from the dead. "Heel" is singular, and hence a metaphoric description of Christ and His death and resurrection.⁴¹ Gerhard argued that "seed" must mean none

³⁹Calov, op. cit., pp. 405-407.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 408.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 421.

other than Christ. The two "seeds" are spoken of as individuals. While they can be taken as collective, Paul argues from the number in Galatians 3:16. The work attributed to the seed is not a mere work of men, but a work of God. It is God who places the enmity between the seeds. Therefore if we take "seed" collectively we oppose the consensus of Scripture that calls it a work of God, and also the other Messianic prophecies. Furthermore, the aim of the passage is to comfort the first parents, and Genesis 4:1 shows that Eve so understood it. In addition, the ancient interpreters, the Targums, and the fathers all take this as a prophecy of the Messiah.⁴² Calov has the same general arguments.⁴³

Crushing the head of the serpent (Satan) means, according to Calov, to remove all the power he has in man by removing the sin of all mankind.⁴⁴ This requires that the Messiah be God. To overcome the whole power of Satan is no mere human work, but divine, for there is no infinite power except God's. Therefore from this very Protevangel the first parents were able to believe not only in the woman's seed, but also necessarily in true and eternal God.⁴⁵ The faithful, the Church, are not the combatants in this battle

⁴²Gerhard, op. cit., pp. 107-109. For the Lutherans to

⁴³Calov, op. cit., pp. 409-413.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 454f.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 457.

with Satan, but are the ones who receive the fruit of the victory of Christ.⁴⁶

Calov concludes his discussion of the verse with a summary of the doctrines taught in this verse: the mystery of the incarnation and the personal union; the power to raise bodies from the dead; the virgin birth (The seed of the woman is mentioned, not that of the man. The man played no part in the generation of Christ.); the humanity of Christ; His mediatorship; His passion and resurrection; the reason for the incarnation; justification by faith; the merit of Christ and its efficacy; the vicarious satisfaction; and the doctrine of the Church.⁴⁷ If nothing else, the list is impressive. Probably not everyone will agree that all these things can be found in this one short verse. Many will insist that the first parents could not have had so clear and detailed a knowledge of the Messiah. Gerhard and Calov would agree that their knowledge may have been obscure or vague, but they would insist that the knowledge of the first parents certainly contained most of these elements. Again 1 Peter 1:10f. comes into consideration. The first parents, like the prophets, diligently inquired about the salvation that was promised them, asking when and in whom this would take place. Genesis 4:1 was important for the Lutherans to

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 456.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 459-470.

the understanding of the passage, for it shows that Eve expected God to be born of her to be her Savior.

Another important passage for the seventeenth-century Lutherans was Genesis 12:3: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and in you will all the nations of the earth be blessed." Calov divides his discussion of the passage into subject, predicate, and object. The subject of the passage is the Messiah, for several reasons. The Protevangel has already offered the promise to the whole human race. By believing this promise (12:3) Abraham was justified. The promise is repeated several times in the succeeding chapters. A comparison of the passages shows that "in you" is equated with "in your seed." Other passages, such as Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 9:2; and Psalm 72:17 apply the same promise to all nations. This requires that the subject of the promise be Christ, for only He can be a blessing to all nations. Paul (Galatians 3:16) and Peter (Acts 3:25f.) show that Jesus is the intended blessing. And finally, even the Rabbis agree that the Messiah is referred to here.⁴⁸

The predicate of the passage is a spiritual blessing. There was no curse of such great magnitude that it required God's blessing, except the curse of sin. The blessing destroys the curse, which is the wrath of God, the accusation

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 798f.

of the Law, and the condemnation of sin. The apposite blessing consists of righteousness, life, and eternal salvation. Only the satisfaction of Christ was able to destroy the curse of the Law and satisfy divine justice. Therefore the passage speaks of Christ.⁴⁹

The object of the promise is all the nations of the earth. They are not only to be called, but also to be given universal grace. This is not only for the elect, but for all nations. Furthermore, the blessing is promised for the future. Therefore Abraham understood the promise as a Messianic prophecy.⁵⁰ With this exposition Gerhard agrees.⁵¹

Again it is evident that the Lutherans are drawing on the regula fidei in expounding the passage. This, they feel, is legitimate because the prophecy speaks of future things. They do not say that Abraham had a clear, detailed knowledge of the person and work of Christ. They say only that he knew the benefits of that work clearly enough to have a saving knowledge

There were those in the seventeenth century who did not understand the prophecies in the same way. Bellarmine was one of these. He said that Genesis 15:6 speaks of the multiplication of Abraham's seed, not of the Messiah. Gerhard

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 799f.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 800f.

⁵¹Gerhard, op. cit., p. 184.

declares that Bellarmine is wrong for the following reasons. Genesis 15:6 is not the first mention of the promise. That came in 12:3, where Christ is manifestly meant, since the promise is to all nations. Both the number of descendants and the land had respect to Christ as their end, for the seed is spiritual seed, taken also from among the Gentiles. The land was given as the place where Christ was to administer His office. Paul cites Abraham's faith as exemplary for Christians. By it they are blessed and justified. And Romans 4:6 connects the passage inseparably with Psalm 32:1: "Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven." Therefore Christ is the Mediator, the principle and proper object of the passage.⁵²

Even though Gerhard draws on the later portions of Scripture, he uses the text of Genesis itself. By it he makes Bellarmine's contention look foolish, along with any other unspiritual interpretations of the passage.

Old Testament Sacrifices

According to Gerhard⁵³ the Levitical sacrifices of the Old Testament were rendered unnecessary by Christ. At no time were the atonement sacrifices effective ex opere operato, but they depended on faith in Christ, to whom they

⁵²Ibid., pp. 327f.

⁵³Haeggglund, op. cit., pp. 202f.

pointed. Because they were types they were efficacious means by which justification and forgiveness of sins were given, for they were offered in faith in Christ. But if the sacrifices were just signs and not types, then they were only Law and did not derive their power from the sufferings of Christ. Nor did they then have any efficacy. But they were types, promises, and therefore Gospel. They served for the strengthening of the Gospel promises and of faith. The word of promise was of their very essence. When the sacrifices were abolished in the New Testament, it was only the external rites that were abolished. The content of the sacrificial system, regeneration and forgiveness of sins, remained. Thus Gerhard can call circumcision and the rite of the Pass-over lamb "sacraments" of the Old Testament.

Calov,⁵⁴ too, finds it necessary to presuppose the work of Christ to make the Old Testament atonement sacrifices understandable and effective. With a wealth of Scripture references he proves that the sacrifices pointed to and confirmed the satisfaction of Christ. "Whatever was represented to the people of God in the Old Testament," he says, "also deals with our satisfaction." He appeals to Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 4:14; 9:9; 9:23f.; and 10:1, and adds that the same idea is implied elsewhere in the New Testament, as in Ephesians 5:2; 1 Corinthians 5:7; and 1 Peter 2:24 and 3:18.

⁵⁴Calov, Socinismus Profligatus, pp. 611-614.

Our satisfaction is explained in the New Testament by references to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. In Daniel 9:24 the work of Christ is not only prefigured, but also called satisfactory. Isaiah 53 explains the annual sacrifice of Leviticus 16 when it calls Christ a lamb. Hebrews 10:5 and 13 tell us that what is prefigured in Psalm 40:7f. is the oblation of Christ's body. Leviticus 6:2 tells us that God is placated by sacrifice; but sacrifices cannot per se make propitiation, so it must be a figure of something to come. The term "sweet-smelling savor" in Genesis 8:21 can only mean that God is placated; and since the remission of sins is only in Christ, it must prefigure Him. Leviticus 16 says clearly that Christ was chosen in our place, bore the sins of the whole world, and made propitiation. And finally Leviticus 17:11 shows the blood of animals to be only a type, as Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6; and Romans 5:10 also testify. Most of Calov's proof-passages, it will be noticed, are derived from the New Testament. But he has said no more here than that the Old Testament atonement sacrifices must point to Christ or they are useless. His practice in expounding the Old Testament is another matter. Sometimes he relies entirely on the testimony of the Old Testament. On the question of whether the satisfaction of Christ was prefigured in the Old Testament high priest he answers in the following manner. The high priest made propitiation (expiat) for sins through sacrifices (Leviticus 4:21). This is

not to be taken as a mere declaration of propitiation, for it says that he made propitiation, also for his own sins. Also other similar passages use the word expiare, not expiationem declarare. Leviticus 4:20 says, "The priest shall make atonement for them and they shall be forgiven." A declaration cannot be a cause of expiation or propitiation. Leviticus 6:7 says that atonement shall be made "before the Lord." This does not mean merely a declaration. The "sweet-smelling savor" of Leviticus 5:12 does not mean to declare, but to offer what propitiates God. Leviticus 16:10 says the high priest propitiates God. In Leviticus 13:6 purification is not made by declaration, but by sacrifices. Thus expiare does not mean only a declaration of grace, but signifies our reconciliation with God. In this there is certainty, but not in a mere declaration.⁵⁵

Let us hear Calov on just one more question here: whether the Old Testament sacrifices propitiated per se. He insists that they did not. The opinion that they did rests on the false principle that not all sins were atoned for in the Old Testament. But beside this, the Holy Ghost says in Hebrews 10:4 that it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should atone or be able to purge the conscience of sin. The bulls and goats were slaughtered only in remembrance of the coming sacrifice. Colossians 2:7 tells us

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 614-616.

that the shadow draws all its force from the body. The sacrifices were thus types, for only Christ could atone for sin, reconcile God, and cleanse consciences. If sacrifices could do this, then righteousness was through the Law, which is false. What then would we do with the work of Christ? Daniel 9:27 tells us that they had efficacy only from the sacrifice of Christ.⁵⁶ In general, then, Calov maintained that the entire sacrificial system typified Christ because it had the same effect. And since Scripture says that there is no means of salvation other than Christ, the sacrifices must prefigure and point to Him. He does not specify how the Old Testament people understood the sacrifices as typical of Christ, nor how clearly. But that they so understood them, he was certain. Gerhard is a little more specific. On Romans 3:25 he points out the typology involved in the verse, where the mercy-seat is referred to. He shows that access to the Ark was restricted, but prayers were directed to it. Prayer in the New Testament is also directed to Christ, but access to Him is free. The blood on the mercy-seat was understood in the Old Testament as that which reconciled Israel to God. Israel also recognized that there is no way of reconciliation except propitiation. But there is no propitiation except our Mediator. With gratitude Israel acknowledged the benefits exhibited in the propitiation, just as

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 603f.

we are bound to eternal gratitude by the same atonement.⁵⁷

This seems to be as near as anyone came to explaining how the Israelites understood their sacrifices. None took it upon himself to psychoanalyze the Hebrew mind and show how they looked upon the rites. The Lutherans simply relied on the clear statements of Scripture and went no further. The rites are described in the Old Testament, and there are sufficient passages in the Old Testament to show that they could not render full satisfaction to God (e. g., Psalm 51: 16f.); in addition to this the New Testament says the rites pointed to Christ. That is all that Scripture says. That is also all that the orthodox Lutherans said. They cannot be accused of imposing anything on the Old Testament, for whatever they "impose" on it, the New Testament gives license to "impose." The Lutherans could perhaps be accused of reading New Testament ideas into the Old Testament, but again, the New Testament gives them license. The New Testament interprets the Old, but even more does the Old interpret the New.

⁵⁷Gerhard, Adnotationes ad Priora capita epistolae D. Pauli ad Romanos, pp. 114f.

CHAPTER VI

CASE STUDIES IN OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINE

The Trinity

The Lutherans of the seventeenth century were in general agreement that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament. The most thorough presentation of the doctrine is found in Gerhard's writings, but such presentations are not lacking in the other writers of the period. Therefore the discussion that follows will be taken mainly from Gerhard and supplemented with additions from Calov and Sebastian Schmidt. This procedure has two advantages. It shows that the orthodox Lutherans were in general agreement on the subject and on the way in which it is proved. And secondly, such a procedure eliminates needless repetition.

For the orthodox Lutherans there was hardly a doctrine in the New Testament that had no points of contact with the Old Testament, since all the fundamental doctrines are necessary for salvation. Hence all who deny that the cardinal doctrine of the Trinity is found in the Old Testament must be opposed.¹ Had there been no one to deny it, the doctrine would have been taken for granted. But there were many who

¹Ludwig Diestel, Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche (Jena: Mauke's Verlag, 1869), p. 476.

did deny it, such as the Socinians and Calixtus. The Lutherans therefore felt compelled to defend the doctrine. Calov even devoted an entire book to the subject, Assertio pluralitatis personarum ex Vetere Testamento.²

Calov lists for us the sources from which the doctrine of the Trinity is derived from the Old Testament. They are the accounts of the creation, the exodus, messianic prophecies, the revelations of God, the prayers and benedictions of the Old Testament, our own regeneration, the indwelling of God in us, New Testament testimonies, the baptism of Christ, the New Testament invocations, and the names and attributes of God used in Scripture.³ As we shall see, Gerhard employs approximately the same sources. But we shall limit the discussion to the Old Testament sources as much as possible.

Gerhard's best discussion of the subject is found in his Exegesis, a fuller discussion of the articles of Holy Writ than that of his Loci Theologici.⁴ In a series of theses he outlines his discussion for us. Thesis 5: "The mystery of the Trinity can and should be confirmed not only from the New, but also from the Old Testament."⁵ Theses

²Ibid., p. 478.

³Abraham Calov, Socinismus Profligatus (Wittenbergae: Joh. Borckard, 1668), pp. 167-177.

⁴John Gerhard, Exegesis (Jenae: Tobiae Steinmanni, 1625), pp. 1ff.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

19-23:6

From the Old Testament four principle arguments [for the Trinity] are urged. The first is from the article of creation. The second from the benefits of the liberation from the Egyptian bondage. The third from the promise of the Messiah. The fourth from the benediction of the Church in Numbers 6:22. These four principle arguments are divided into two classes of Old Testament passages in which the mystery of the Trinity is set forth, of which the first is the plurality, the second the trinity of the persons in God, which also the four classes of New Testament passages prove.

While he asserts that the Trinity can be proved from the Old Testament, he also reminds us of the limitations of such proof:⁷

1. We do not say that the testimonies are of equal clarity with the New Testament testimonies. The doctrine is taught implicitly (implicite), not explicitly (explicite). It was reserved to be fully revealed at the time of the Messiah.⁸
2. We do not wish to prove anything against the adversaries by obscure Old Testament quotes, but we maintain that Old Testament testimonies can be used to support the doctrine of the Trinity, since God always revealed Himself and the Church always acknowledged Him and called on Him as the one divine essence, yet three distinct persons.

Each of Gerhard's arguments is a syllogism, both premises of which must be either self-evident or proved. His first argument for the Trinity is as follows.⁹

⁶Ibid., p. 20.

⁷Ibid., pp. 930f.

⁸This appears to be contrary to what was said supra, p. 73, footnote 9, continued on p. 74f.

⁹We here reproduce the first argument in some detail so as to better represent Gerhard's procedure. The other arguments will be summarized as much as possible.

As many divine persons as the work of creation is attributed to, so many persons were recognized in one divine essence.

Creation is attributed to three distinct persons.

Ergo.

The major premise, he says, is proved by passages ascribing creation to God alone. The minor premise is proved by three factors in general.

(1) From the Mosiac phrase bara' elohim, where the plural noun takes a singular verb. This is not merely "sacred language," as the Photinians object, for even the pronouns are used in the plural. Nor can the divine name be construed as a mere singular, for it also has a singular form, which is used in Scripture. It must be taken as plural. Neither can the divine name be considered as a plural of honor, for the singular Eloah occurs instead of the name Yahweh. Nor would the use of a plural of honor in other languages affect this one in Hebrew. Some point to the use of the plural forms with a singular meaning in the Old Testament, but Rabbi Ibn Ezra has shown that these cannot be used as parallels. We must be careful, however, not to attribute plurality to each person of the Trinity. This would commingle the Trinity and cause endless confusion. In itself the plural divine name does not signify three, but other Scripture indicates triplicity.

(2) From Genesis 1:27, where we find plural noun, pronoun, and verb. The Jews and Photinians object to the use of this verse, but they are wrong. They say that it refers

to the powers in man, but 2:7 and 3:22 militate against this interpretation. Or they say that God is using the majestic plural. But there are no parallels for this in Scripture. Or they say that He is speaking with the angels, but our first premise rules this out; they would then be of the one divine essence. Or they say He is speaking to the four elements. But these did not create; they were created. Or they even say that He is speaking to the irrational creation, as in Isaiah 1:2. But God never communicates to creation. He just says, "Hear!"

(3) From the prophetic manner of speaking, in which plural pronouns and participles are used in speaking of God.

The minor premise is proved more specifically in three ways. (1) In Genesis 1:1 reshith refers to the Son of God (compare Genesis 49:3 and Deuteronomy 21:17). 'Amar in the same verse has reference to the Word of God, Who is personal and proceeds from the Father. This is evident from John 1:1 and Proverbs 8:22, as well as other New Testament explanations, and from the Chaldaic paraphrases (Targums), where the Messiah is called memrah, from the same verb.

The Spirit is proved here from the name, the attributes, the description of Him as a wind, the use of the participle merachepeth, the time of the event (there was as yet no air), from other Scripture passages, from the divine character of the work, from the Targums (Spirit of mercy), and from the consensus of interpreters. There is no other Spirit of God,

and this cannot refer to angels or merely the power of God.

(2) Psalm 33:6 shows that the Word is the Son of God, and the Spirit is distinguished as proceeding through the Son, as also other Scripture passages testify. The works of creation are attributed to the Son in Proverbs 8:22, where He is called "wisdom." Besides creation this verse attributes to Him eternity, sonship, personal subsistence, and distinction from the Father. Furthermore, the Septuagint of Zechariah 13:5 has eggenese me for the same verb used in Proverbs 8. Some writers objected that this verse does not call Him wisdom of God, but just "wisdom." Gerhard replies that this is just "inane subterfuge."

Wisdom of Solomon 9:1 also attributes creation to the Word. And creation is said to be "through me" (Isaiah 44:24), "with me" (Proverbs 8:30), and "through my word" (Zechariah 13:7) in the Old Testament.

Finally, the minor premise is proved by those passages which attribute creation to the Holy Spirit: Job 26:13 and 33:4; and Psalm 104:30. He is said to renovate and decorate the earth in Isaiah 40:12 and 42:16; and in wisdom of Solomon 12:1.¹⁰

Therefore the work of creation shows that three persons are recognized in the one divine essence.¹⁰

It will be well for us, before proceeding to Gerhard's

¹⁰Gerhard, Exegesis, pp. 1037-1062.

other arguments, to look at the arguments of Sebastian Schmidt. He places more reliance on proper distinctions, by which he shows that the doctrine of the Trinity can be proved from Genesis 1:3, wayyomer elohim.

There are several things he says we must remember. Every word and work of God ad extra is indivisible. The whole Trinity is their subject. Also, all persons of the Trinity are fully God. Furthermore, we must distinguish between a word by which an assertion is understood, and a word that God speaks.

Then he presents his eight reasons for concluding the Trinity from wayyomer. (1) Since God created by speaking, it may be assumed that there was some kind of word through which He spoke. The Word was the medium of creation. Therefore the Son of God is not the word spoken by the Father, but the Word through which the Father spoke and created. (2) This word was in the beginning and was from all eternity, as John 1:1 says. (3) This word was with God in the beginning and from all eternity, hence it belonged to the Trinity. (4) This Mosaic Word was God Himself, for there can be nothing in the divinity that is not divine, nor can anyone else create. (5) Without Him was nothing made. The word was not merely an instrument of God, but one with Him in power. (6) This Word derived His divine personality from God who spoke through Him, for the word follows from the speaker, and nowhere does it say that two persons are speaking, but the

word is the word of a person. (7) The origin of the Word is incomprehensible, but it communicates the essence and nature of God, for God created through His essence. (8) Since the Word originated by generation, it is called the Son of God.¹¹

Schmidt asserts that the verb in this verse cannot signify just a divine wish or desire, for God wished the creation from all eternity. Neither was it merely a command, for then Moses would have used the word for "command," *tsawah*. Nor does it refer to human-like speech, for God does not have organs of speech. Therefore it must refer to the hypostatic Word.

We might point out here that while Schmidt's presentation may appear philosophical and filled with fine distinctions, the amount of grammatical detail he presents is just as impressive. There are also frequent references to both Christian and Jewish commentators.¹²

We may now proceed with Gerhard's second argument for supporting the doctrine of the Trinity from the Old Testament. This argument is based on the benefits of the liberation from Egypt.

Whoever led the Jews out of Egypt, gave them manna, etc., was acknowledged and called upon as the true God. The three persons of the Godhead led them out, etc. Ergo.

¹¹Sebastian Schmidt, Disputationum Theologicarum Philologicorum Fasciculus (Argentorati: Alberti Ottonis Fabri, 1676), pp. 1-37.

¹²Ibid.

The major premise is proved by the benefits of the promise, as described in Genesis 15:14 et al., by the completion of these promises, by the prophetic description of God ("I am the Lord your God who led you up out of the land of Egypt."), and from the manifest exclusion in Deuteronomy 32:12 ("The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no foreign god with him.").

The minor premise is proved in general because God is a Trinity. It is proved specifically by many passages. In Deuteronomy 5:26 the voice of the living God speaks from the fire. The noun elohim indicates plurality of persons. Compare also 2 Samuel 7:23 and 1 Chronicles 17:21, where the verb is used in the singular, and then in the plural. That the Father liberated from Egypt there is no doubt.

That the Son liberated the Jews is proved first by Genesis 28:12, where the Angel of the Lord promised the land to Jacob. Genesis 48:15f. shows that this does not refer to a created angel, but the Son of God. For in this passage the article indicates that He is someone superior; Jacob seeks a benediction from Him and thus associates Him with God; and Jacob gave Him honor which is due only to God.

Liberation from Egypt by the Son is also proved by Exodus 3:2, where the Angel of the Lord appears in the bush. This was not a created angel. He is called Jahweh. He calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and says that He has heard the cry of His people. Deuteronomy 33:13 shows

that Moses asked a blessing of Him, just as Jacob did. This apparition is a majestic one and a type of the incarnation, for the whole light of the divine majesty was assumed in the human nature and did not consume it. The fathers and the Rabbis, and even the adversaries agree that this angel was uncreate.

He is spoken of as separate from God in Exodus 11:1, where God speaks concerning God and separate persons must be assumed. The same is true of Exodus 16:10ff. But Exodus 23:20f.:

Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

Here the angel is spoken of as distinct from God. He is the Son of God. He is called Jahweh in Exodus 13:21. "My name is in him" indicates the substantial image and character of God. God's name was not in any other angel (compare Hebrews 1:4f.). To him are attributed divine works and divine worship. And in Exodus 33:2ff. He is also called Jahweh. Therefore the Son delivered the Jews from Egypt, and is one of the three persons of the Trinity.

That the Holy Ghost liberated them from Egypt also is evident from Isaiah 63:10. The context, verses 7-11, names three distinct persons (panim). His work is that of a mediator, through whom the Father speaks. Therefore also the Holy Ghost delivered the Jews from the Egyptian bondage and

is also true God. It was, then, the Trinity that did the delivering.¹³

Gerhard's third proof is the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. He says:

There were two heavenly doctrines in the Old Testament: Law and Messianic promise. There is no doubt that both were repeated at Israelite cultic gatherings. Messianic promise included the mystery of the Trinity. Ergo, whenever the promises were repeated, so was the mystery publicly confessed.

The major premise is assumed. The minor premise is proved in four ways. First, the Messiah is called true man and true God in the Old Testament. He receives divine names, such as Adonai (Psalm 110:1), Elohim (Psalm 45:6), El (Isaiah 9:6), Jahweh (Jeremiah 23:5), and Jahweh Zebaoth (Isaiah 44:6). He has divine attributes, such as eternity (Proverbs 8:22) and omnipotence (Isaiah 9:6). He does divine works: creation (Isaiah 35:4), redemption (Isaiah 63:3), salvation (Isaiah 35:4), justification (Isaiah 53:11), and others. And he receives divine worship and glory (Psalm 2:11; 72:11; etc.). Secondly, he was a subsistent person in the Old Testament. For if He was true God, then He existed from all eternity. Third, He was considered distinct from the Father. This is clear from His being called "Son" in Psalm 2:7. Also from His personal properties (Psalm 89:28f.) and from the repetition of the name Jahweh in Genesis 19:24 and Exodus 34:5. Fourth, He was sent by the Holy Ghost (Isaiah 48:16).

¹³Gerhard, Exegesis, pp. 1065-1076.

Therefore the Messianic promises show that God was Triune.¹⁴

Gerhard's fourth proof for the Trinity in the Old Testament is from the blessing of the Church, or the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:22-27. He does not use a syllogism here, but simply points to six reasons why this passage has reference to the Trinity. The divine name is repeated three times. The various benefits of each person are listed. The analogy of faith (regula fidei) demands it. Other passages prove it. The Christian interpreters have always agreed that this is the sense of the passage. And finally, the ceremony with which its utterance was to be observed indicates that it has reference to the Trinity. Gerhard also points out that this passage indicates the unity of the Godhead as well. It uses singular verbs, singular pronouns, and the singular divine name, Jahweh.¹⁵ Therefore the Godhead is not only three, but it is also one.

These are the four main proofs for the Trinity in the Old Testament. Gerhard also lists several others, but does not develop them in detail. Rather than "proofs" we might want to call them "testimonies" or "indications" pointing to the same truth. He says the Trinity is indicated wherever the Bible speaks of God with a plural, whether that be a noun, pronoun, verb, or participle. God sometimes speaks of

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 1080-1082.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 1085f. *Prolegomena*, pp. 1085f.

Himself in the plural, as in Genesis 1:26. Sometimes Jahweh speaks of Jahweh; this, too, points to a plurality of persons. Wherever mention is made of the Son of God, as in Psalm 2:7, it indicates a distinction of persons. Genesis 1:1 also lists three divine persons. Where the name Jahweh appears with three of His powers, there the three persons are hinted at, as in Numbers 6:3. Wherever the word "holy" is triply repeated, there also the Trinity is hinted at. Wherever God speaks of Himself is another indication. And still another is in Genesis 18, where three men appear to Abraham and are called Jahweh.¹⁶

With all of these Calov agrees, and adds still a few more. One other is Genesis 19:24, where the Lord rained fire and brimstone from the Lord. Other cases occur when God sends and is sent, as in Isaiah 48:19; Jeremiah 23:6; and Zechariah 2:8, and where God anoints and is anointed, as in Psalms 45:8 and 110:1.¹⁷

The Lutherans, it seems, have here followed sound procedure. They have not departed from the regula fidei, the clear passages of Scripture. Nor have they proved their point ex post facto, from the New Testament. The great majority of passages used are from the Old Testament itself. The number of passages referred to is overwhelming. Many

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 1086-1102.

¹⁷Calov, Socinismus Profligatus, pp. 164f.

more are listed in their discussions, but have been omitted here for the sake of brevity. Only in a small number of cases can they be accused of arguing in a circle, or proving something in one passage by assuming it in another, and then using the first to prove the second. In all but a few cases it is a clear passage that is referred to. Not everyone, it is granted, will agree that every passage means what Gerhard, for example, takes it to mean. But the sheer weight of the evidence is overwhelming as well as clear. The orthodox Lutherans, therefore, have proved their point.

The Person and Work of Christ

The orthodox Lutherans also found the doctrine of Christ in the Old Testament. We have seen in the previous chapter how they went about doing so. It was their contention that the Old Testament not only gives us the Law and prophecies of the Messiah, but that it also explained clearly His person and work. We will see now just how much the Lutherans derived from the Old Testament about His person and work, or in other terms, just how clearly this doctrine was revealed in the Old Testament.

Gerhard deals with this subject in his comments on Deuteronomy 18:15-19. In relating the pericope to its context, he says that the passage deals not with the prophets to come, but with the Prophet. The point of the passage is to show Israel that magic and the like are of no help before God.

Only the Messiah avails anything before God. Therefore they should trust Him and nothing else.

Gerhard then analyzes the text and context. In verses 15f. is a repetition made of the promise given at Horeb. The divine oracle in this pericope confirms the promise and speaks of the person and office of the Messiah. He will be true man (verses 15 and 18) and true God, born of a virgin, for the office of mediator (verse 16) requires divinity. The promise is furthermore joined with a command to hear Him, and those who reject Him will be punished (verse 19).¹⁸ This passage proves, Gerhard goes on to say, that Christ has fulfilled all the prophecies we have shown in this passage as well as all others also. Therefore He is the true Messiah, even though He was opposed by the Jews. It also proves that the Socinian error must be opposed. The Socinians said that Christ did not satisfy the Law for us and reconcile the Father to us. This passage shows that Christ was to be a mediator, for He is like unto Moses, who was also a mediator. Furthermore, the passage shows that Christ did not drop from heaven, but was born of the virgin Mary, a true man. And finally, verse 19, "I myself will require it (his soul) of him," shows that whoever does not believe in Christ is not a member of the Church militant, and cannot be a member of the Church triumphant. We should therefore oppose

¹⁸John Gerhard, Commentarius super Deuteronomium (Jenae: Joh. Ludovici Neuenhant, 1657), pp. 1107f.

all those who dare to promise the kingdom of heaven to those gentle souls who are destitute of knowledge of and faith in Christ.¹⁹

Even more interesting are Gerhard's observations, or applications, from this pericope, perhaps intended for sermonic use. He notices that the passage shows that Christ is also a prophet as well as a priest and king. He administers the prophetic office through the apostles. He was sent both to preach and to redeem. Christ and Moses are both similar and dissimilar. Christ is the greater of the two. We need a mediator like Moses. Verse 16 shows that in prayer God hears the internal desires of the heart, the desires that are not even expressed. The passage also shows that a new doctor and mediator of the Law was needed, and this had to be no less than Christ, whose words are from the Father's own breath. Christ took over the office of Moses in a greater manner. He applied the Law to Himself. The Word of Christ is the Gospel, as John 1:17 also shows. Those who despise Christ are always punished. Examples of such punishment were the Jews, who in 70 A. D. were destroyed along with the city of Jerusalem. And finally, this passage also shows that all prophecies of Christ were hidden and concealed, for they were not yet revealed in their fulfilment.²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1119f.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 1130-1132.

It is quite evident that Gerhard has gotten a great deal out of this short text. But it must be remembered that this is not an example of his exegesis. It is rather an illustration of his use of a passage. Following Gerhard's cues we have a rich source of homiletical material. But more than this, from a New Testament point of view we can even use this passage for doctrine. Hardly a point that Gerhard has made is not supported from this text, even though it is doubtful that the Israelites understood all of it from this one text.

A good example of Gerhard's exegesis of a Messianic passage is available in his commentary on 1 Peter. Again we must note that it is a New Testament passage that he is interpreting, but it is useful for our purpose nevertheless. There is no need to repeat what has been explored in the previous chapter.

The passage is 1 Peter 2:24,

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.

Gerhard shows that the apostle is quoting Isaiah 53:4, 6, 11, and 12. He points out that the words the apostle uses are taken from these passages. In Isaiah 53:4 the Septuagint uses $\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\epsilon\iota$, and in verse 10 it uses $\alpha\nu\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$, and $\alpha\nu\eta\gamma\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ in verse 12, which Peter also uses. The final phrase, "by whose stripes we are healed," harks back to Isaiah 53:5 and almost matches the Septuagint, especially because Peter uses

the relative pronoun twice in the fashion of Hebrew pleonasm. But he changes the person for purposes of application, since the Jews took this passage (Isaiah 53) to refer to their own sufferings.²¹ This manner of interpreting reminds one very much of the present-day methods of Biblical theology.

Gerhard's practical bent in exegesis may be seen from his comments on Romans 3:25, "through the passing over of former sins" Gerhard remarks,²²

Not only God's mercy but also His justice come to light in forgiving sin, for He does not do so casually or unjustly or ignorantly or with a false estimation, but in light of the full satisfaction of Christ.

To the question of why the "former sins" are mentioned, Gerhard answers,²²

it is not to teach that Christ died only for original sin, but 1. to show that the virtue of Christ's merit extended also to sins committed in the Old Testament and that Christ did not make satisfaction only for sins to follow His crucifixion, but also for those perpetrated by the first parents. For His passion was effective before it took place, and His benefits were both antroactive and retroactive. 2. To show that it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away sin, Hebrews 10:4. The lamb, sacrifices, and the Old Testament propitiations were shadows of Christ's satisfaction. 3. To obviate the Epicurean opinion that He was giving license to sin, Romans 6:6. 4. To give us a solid consolation that also our present infirmity will be forgiven, since all past sin was remitted by grace.

²¹John Gerhard, Commentarius super priorem D. Petri epistolam (Jenae: Johannis Reiffenbergeri, 1641), pp. 295-298.

²²John Gerhard, Adnotationes ad Priora capita epistolae D. Pauli ad Romanos (Jenae: Christiani von Saher, 1645), p. 116.

It is the last two points especially that merit our consideration. They show that the Lutheran teaching about the Messiah was not just theoretical, or based entirely on the "proof-text" view of Scripture, but that the Lutheran doctrine is intimately related to saving faith and the Gospel itself. It is not only a logical, but also a theological necessity.

The same may be said of Calov. Just to illustrate, we might point to his answer to the question, whether justification by faith was first revealed by Christ. He insists that it was not. First of all, such an opinion is unscriptural. Romans 3:21 says that it was revealed by the Law and the Prophets that salvation is without the Law. Also John the Baptist taught the doctrine, as in John 3:36. Acts 10:43 says that all the prophets taught it. Habakkuk 2:4 is used in the New Testament to confirm the doctrine, and Hebrews 10:38 says it was handed down. The Old Testament testifies likewise. Ezekiel 33:2 tells us that a sinner may escape through repentance. The confessions of the faithful about the Messiah point to the same conclusion, as in Jeremiah 23:6. Especially Isaiah 53:11 is an annunciation of justification by faith, as is also Psalm 32:1, which is quoted in the New Testament several times. Moses speaks of gracious forgiveness in Exodus 34:6f. And finally, the faith of Abraham is pointed to as an example for us in Romans 4:5. Hence justification by faith is a doctrine taught

throughout the Bible.²³ We have shown in the previous chapter that Calov believed that faith must be faith in Christ, either promised or manifest.²⁴ So we observe that for both Gerhard and Calov the doctrine of the Messiah's person and work had to be taught and believed in the Old Testament. This was not merely a Lutheran prejudice or logical construction, but a doctrinal and exegetical necessity.

²³Calov, Socinismus Profligatus, pp. 699f.

²⁴Supra, pp. 72, 75f.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The study of hermeneutics as a separate discipline grew mainly out of the sola Scriptura principle of Lutheranism. On the one hand the clarity of Scripture was being attacked by the Papists and enthusiasts. The Lutherans answered by showing that Scripture could be clearly understood. On the other hand, Scripture was being falsely interpreted in many different ways by the sectarians of the seventeenth century, especially the Socinians. Against them the Lutherans had to show that there is only one correct way to interpret Scripture, and they had to show what that one way is.

The methodology of the orthodox Lutherans stemmed from two sources. Again, it was the sola Scriptura principle. Only Scripture could interpret Scripture. Yet it was also true that reason played a part; but the part it played was ministerial, not magisterial. The methodology of humanism could validly be employed in understanding ancient writings. Melancthon, for example, included the interpretation of the Bible in his works on rhetoric and dialectics. This did not mean, however, that one had to be a rhetorician to understand the Bible. That could be done by any reasonably intelligent Christian with the help of the Holy Ghost. The emphasis in the sixteenth century was on the attitude of the

reader of Scripture and on spiritual aids, such as oratio, meditatio, tentatio. As hermeneutics grew into a scientific discipline these requirements were not forgotten, but they did recede somewhat into the background as it became necessary to explicate the nature and importance of context, grammatical study, and figurative language. This development reached a peak with Glassius' Philologia Sacra, an encyclopedic catalog of all known phenomena of Biblical language.¹ This was the analytic approach to Scripture.

But the seventeenth-century Lutherans maintained that the interpretation of the Bible is also a synthetic process. No passage can be taken alone, out of its immediate context, or out of the context of the entire testimony of Scripture. The regula fidei, a collection of clear passages of Scripture, is normative for the interpretation of other passages. There may be a variety of ways to interpret a given passage, but none of them can stand if it contradicts a clear passage. The regula fidei may also summarize or synthesize the clear passages of Scripture. Thus it can be identified with any or all of the ecumenical Creeds, or with the Lutheran Confessions, or even with dogmatics. Such identifications are possible because the regula consists of the articles of faith. And these, it is assumed, are set forth in clear words of Scripture.

¹Salomon Glassius, Philologia Sacra (Lipsiae: Jo. Frederici Gleditschii, 1725), pp. lff.

The sense of Scripture is the sense intended by the Holy Ghost. This sense is always the literal sense, although it may not be the sense of the external words. The Bible, like many a book, uses figurative language. It also uses types and allegories to express ideas. It may also imply something that the words do not expressly say. Therefore, exposition of Scripture is not bound to mere grammatical analysis or description. There is, of course a difficulty when the subject of typology is touched on. On the one side is the testimony of the New Testament, demanding that certain passages be understood of Christ, the Church, etc. On the other side is the context of such passages, indicating that they speak of certain events at certain times. They do not speak directly of Christ, the Church, etc., i. e., they are not direct prophecies. They are merely types. The Lutherans of the seventeenth century accounted for this by saying that some passages have a "double" sense; yet they insisted that the sense of Scripture is one. This may seem to be an equivocation, but it is no more equivocal than the New Testament, which says on the one hand that the passages in question speak of Christ, and even that the Old Testament saints knew that they did; and on the other hand it says that such teachings were first made manifest in the New Testament (Romans 16:25f.). One must at least give credit to the Lutherans for rejecting neither the sense which the context demands, nor the New Testament use of the passages.

At any rate, all interpretation of Scripture requires the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, mediated through nothing else than the Bible itself. Thus enlightened, reason will be able to resolve many difficulties in Scripture; but not all of them. In some places the subject-matter is beyond the ken of even enlightened reason; in others several interpretations may be possible; in still others, none are completely satisfactory. There will always be problems. But so long as we do not depart from the clear testimonies of Scripture, these problems will be of little consequence to our faith.

The distinction between Law and Gospel, brought to the forefront of theology by Luther, was also considered important for the exposition of Scripture by the seventeenth-century Lutherans. It is only very rarely that they make an explicit distinction in their commentaries, saying, "This passage is Law," or "This is Gospel." But the distinction underlies the whole approach to many passages, and is expressed in indirect terms. The Lutherans are careful to keep promises and threats, rewards and punishments in the proper frame of reference.

The Lutherans also admitted valid inferences as a means of interpretation. It was self-evident that such inferences must be in harmony with the regula fidei, and that the logic employed must be faultless. They were not adding to the sola Scriptura principle thereby, but living up to it. Many

inferences are necessary in the reading of Scripture. Without them it would remain a dark and useless book, unrelated to any human situation. Without valid inference people can only read Scripture "like a cow," as Luther said.

Lutheran orthodoxy asserted that the Old Testament contains Messianic prophecies which can be understood of nothing else than a coming Messiah who will save men from sin. This idea is derived from New Testament passages like Hebrews 11. In their expositions of the prophecies the Lutherans employed three approaches. They analyzed the grammar and vocabulary of the passages and compared them with other Old Testament passages. They drew inferences from the passages. And they made use of the testimony of the New Testament. The first of these three approaches is unquestionably valid. The second has been called into question. It has been declared doubtful that the people of the Old Testament could have drawn these inferences from the passages. There is a problem of epistemology involved in this respect. The inferences may be validly drawn from the passages, but it cannot be mathematically proved that the passages were so understood by the Old Testament saints. The objection, of course, is not new, but goes back to the Socinians. The third method, the use of the New Testament, is today considered simply unfair, for we must go back beyond the New Testament and see how the passages were understood before the "official" interpretation was imposed upon them. This view, too, can be

traced back to the Socinians.

The Lutherans were again only reproducing the testimony of the New Testament, which says that the Old Testament spoke of Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:44) and that He was the object of faith in the Old Testament (Hebrews 11; Romans 16:25f.). In many places it expounds the prophecies. It does not say how the passages were understood, and indeed can hardly do so. Nor do the Lutherans. They show what the passage says and what its implications are, but cannot describe the cognitive processes of the ancient Jew. If there is a lacuna, the blame must be laid on the New Testament, and ultimately on the Holy Spirit, for the Lutherans do not go beyond His testimony.

With typology and allegory it was a different matter. There is no need to prove that a type exists. One need only point to the similarity. The book of Hebrews has opened the door for the use of types. The interpreter can go on from there. Hebrews has shown that the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament pointed to Christ as its antitype. This much is doctrine. The interpreter may now examine every aspect of the sacrificial system to discover how it explains the sacrifice of Christ. He may not, however, completely ignore the place of the sacrificial system in Old Testament religion. Nor may any findings derived from typology be made binding for doctrine. They are merely aids to teaching and preaching.

Again the question enters the picture, How did the Jews understand the types? That they pointed to Christ is clear from the New Testament. It is also clear that they had no validity except in view of the Antitype. But how they were understood is impossible to say. Whether the Lutherans were discussing Messianic prophecy, or the Trinity in the Old Testament, or typology, or the sacrifices of the Old Testament, there always came the answer that the knowledge of these things may have been comparatively obscure, but it was present; that the doctrines were taught sufficiently, though implicitly. The teachings were not explicit, and the knowledge was not photographically clear; but that they were present in the Old Testament cannot be denied.

In the previous chapter we examined two Christian doctrines as the seventeenth-century Lutherans claimed them to be in the Old Testament. Their interpretations, we noticed, are based on grammatical exegesis of the Old Testament passages, not on the New Testament. In many cases logic was utilized to arrive at the conclusions. But even more often we saw that points of grammar or lexicography were pointed to, and that other Old Testament passages were referred to. We cannot deny that the general procedure is valid, even though we may point to a particular instance where a passage was misapplied or a grammatical point overlooked. Nor can we accuse the Lutherans of merely projecting Christian doctrines backward because it seems to them a logical necessity.

The passages used to prove these doctrines do at least imply and admit of such interpretations, even if the doctrines are not stated in so many words.

The present-day scientific scholars in the Old Testament do not in general agree with the methods of the old Lutherans. They consider these methods dishonest, especially when the New Testament is used to interpret Old Testament passages. But their own methods are equally dishonest when they conclude that the New Testament has "re-interpreted" a passage, since a reinterpretation is not a literal, proper interpretation. Modern scholars also disagree with the proposition that legitimate inferences can be used in interpretation, for they maintain that the people of the Old Testament did not think in modern logical patterns. But the evidence does not support this contention. The New Testament and the Rabbinic literature show that many Jews did reach the conclusions asserted by the Lutherans. Furthermore, modern Old Testament scholarship is itself fond of drawing inferences, with the difference that they are not same ones that have always been drawn by the Church. A third point on which they disagree with the Old Lutherans is the use of the summae, or Scriptural axioms. They do not wish to be bound by any doctrinal or confessional presuppositions, but wish rather to be left free to draw their own conclusions. Yet they are bound by the alternative: philosophical presuppositions.

Hardly any of the criticisms of the position of the old

Lutherans is original, except in some of the details. Nearly every criticism, whether of methodology or of the conclusions of their exegesis, was maintained by either Bellarmine or the Socinians, and was dealt with by the Lutherans at the time. Some of the criticisms even date back to the Sadducees, and others were asserted by the Medieval Jews. The results of this investigation indicate, therefore, that it would be well for present-day students of the Old Testament to reconsider the contributions of seventeenth-century Lutheranism, to assimilate these contributions, and then to correlate them with the discoveries of the last century. Unless something of this nature is done, we are in danger of progressing only backward to the position of the seventeenth-century skeptics. There is no need to duplicate the work that was done for us by the old Lutherans three hundred years ago. We cannot move forward by side-stepping them.

APPENDIX A

CAUSES OF OBSCURITIES¹

Obscurities, or hesitations, arise in the reading of the sacred books:

1. Because of ignorance of the argument.
2. Because of an error in writing.
3. Because a proper distinction is not made in the passage.
4. Because of an uncommon manner of expression.
5. From a passage whose meaning is unknown, either
 - a. in its proper and native meaning, or
 - b. the translation and the trope involved.
6. From many passages which confuse because of
 - a. the Hebrew phrase or construction, or
 - b. some hidden form.
7. From a whole sentence, because of
 - a. a figure of speech,
 - b. ignorance of the matter discussed or failure to pay sufficient attention to the matter, or
 - c. ignorance of an unusual Scriptural usage, either
 - aa. common to all of Scripture, or
 - bb. peculiar to some books only.

¹Andrea Hyperius, De Theologo seu de Ratione Studii Theologici (Basiliae: Joannis Operinus, 1556), pp. 101-119.

APPENDIX B

TESTIMONIES FOR THE TRINITY¹

We piously imitate the old practice of collecting testimonies for the Trinity from the Old Testament. What rules are to be followed in such a collection? The scholastics set forth eight rules, to which we add a ninth. The Trinity is found in the Old Testament by virtue of:

1. The signification itself, as when all three persons are named.
2. Numerical evidence, as the plural form elohim.
3. The attribution of works, such as the creation through the Word.
4. Clear terms like "I have begotten thee."
5. A triple iteration like the Trisagion of Isaiah six.
6. The order of the words in cases where the name of God is repeated: "God, our God."
7. Confluence in the act of sending. Isaiah 48:16.
8. Apparitions such as Genesis 18.
9. Habitual constructions like "from Him, through Him, and in Him." Romans 11:36.

These rules have since needed some clarification:

Where Scripture uses the plural, plurality is intended. In Genesis 1:1 elohim does not necessarily specify the Trinity, for in 3:5 the devil uses it in the sense of "divine persons." Adjectives are also used plurally of God. This is not an idiom of the language, for the ancient Rabbis also perceived the plurality. Also, whenever God speaks of Himself in the plural, the Trinity is hinted at. Genesis 1:26; cf. 3:22; 11:7.

Luther gave us the rule that where God speaks of Himself as a person, the three persons are signified. The Spirit is spoken of with two names at the same time when He speaks in Scripture, viz., the Holy Spirit and holy men, prophets, etc. 2 Peter 1:21.

¹Summarized from Martin Chemnitz, Loci Theologici (Frankfurti ad Moenum: Ioannes Spies, 1591), I, 38-40.

Where YHWH is used in repetition, whether two or three times, the persons are distinguished. Psalm 66:8; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:3; 33:22; Numbers 6:23.

Manifestations distinguish the persons. Exodus 23:20; Jeremiah 32:5,9; 33:15f.; Psalm 33:6; Daniel 9:19; Psalm 2:7; 110:1,3,5.

Rules on the works of God ad extra and ad intra²

Augustine has set forth the following rules: (1) Opera ad extra sunt indivisa. When one person does a work, it is the work of all three, indistinct. When there is a contrast of God to the creature, or when He opposes idols, it speaks of the one eternal essence. (2) Opera ad intra sunt divisa. Works intra sese are not communicated to the three persons, but one does them. When the divinity is described intra se, persons are distinguished and order and properties are assigned to the persons.

Useful and necessary observations:

1. When one person is named in a work ad extra, all three are understood.
2. Sometimes all are mentioned, as in 2 Corinthians 13.
3. Scripture attributed one and the same operation to each person in different places.
4. Arians object that some passages limit attributes to one person. But when God opposes idols or creatures it speaks of the one divine essence.
5. Sometimes the Church names some or all the persons, but directs its prayer to the one essence and at the same time to all the persons. (Luther)
6. The persons are distinguished not only interiorally, but also externally, according to their beneficial works.
7. Some divine names are essential, some personal, as "The Father is God."

²Ibid., pp. 45-48.

APPENDIX C

DISTINCTIONS FOR COHERENCE IN THE PROPHETS¹

Where do they attack vices and where do they praise virtues?

Where is precept, where exhortation?

Where is promise, where consolation?

Where do they speak of religious matters, where of civil?

Where do they speak of magistrates, where of subjects?

Where do they dispute, where give maxims?

Where do they predict the future, where merely narrate before the act?

Where do they speak of Christ, where of the Church?

Where do they speak of the rejection of the Jews, where of the call of the Gentiles?

Where is Law, where Gospel?

Where do they speak with God, where do they argue?

Whoever will rightly distinguish must apply diligence,
not mediocrity.

¹Translated from Matthius Flacius Illyricus, Clavis Scripturae Sacrae (Lipsiae: Johannis Justi Erythropili, 1695; editio prima, 1567), II, 95.

APPENDIX D

CAUSES OF CORRUPT INTERPRETATIONS¹

Every hallucination opposed to sound interpretation is from one of the following causes.

A. In the subject

1. Intellect
 - a. Inability
 - aa. natural
 - bb. due to negligence
 - b. Preoccupation
2. Malicious will, which the Holy Ghost calls

B. In the object

1. Too great a splendor and perspicuity
2. Weakness in the symbols, due to
 - a. Complexity, from
 - aa. Sense
 - aaa. Terseness
 - bbb. Length
 - ccc. Ambiguity: real or apparent
 - bb. Literature
 - cc. Style
 - dd. Order
 - ee. Connection
 - ff. Apparent contradiction
 - b. Incomplexity
 - aa. Obscurity
 - bb. Equivocation

¹Adapted from Johann Conrad Dannhauer, Idea Boni Interpretatis (Argentorati: Josiae Staedelii, 1670), p. 32.

APPENDIX E

RULES FOR INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS¹

1. The prophets often use the words of their own time in speaking of future things.
2. They delight in using tropes and figures.
3. Sometimes they jump from one metaphor to another, and return to the first.
4. The name of the figure is often attributed to the thing represented, e. g., Christ was called David.
5. Proper names of nations are transferred. For example, the faithful are called the true Israel.
6. Proper names are sometimes used to allude to words derived from the same root.
7. The ten tribes are called Israel, Jacob, Samaria, Joseph, or Ephraim; the other two are called the kingdom of Judah, the house of David, Jerusalem, or Zion.
8. Verbs of thinking or speaking are often used for verbs of action, and vice versa.
9. The prophets sometimes speak of Christ and salvation through Him as a battle and victory.
10. Provinces and cities are spoken of as though they were men, or even women.
11. The prophets sometimes employ dialogue.
12. Sometimes they omit words which ought to be understood from the context.
13. Sometimes they do not call attention to a point of comparison that is intended.
14. For the genus they often substitute a certain species.

¹Abridged from Abraham Calov, Biblia Illustrata (Dresdae et Lipsiae: Johannis Christophori Zimmermanni, 1719), II, 6f.

15. The prophets do not always observe the precise order of time as histories do.
16. The prophets often pass from the type to the antitype, from their own time to the time of the New Testament, from history or words of the Law to an oracle of the Messiah and His kingdom or words of the Gospel, or refer to New Testament things with deeds, phrases, allusions, or similarities.
17. The prophets usually oppose the rich, and then comfort those who are fearful.
18. By "Zion" and "Jerusalem" the prophets sometimes mean those who dwell there who are not converted to Christ, sometimes those who are converted to Him, and sometimes they jump from the one to the other.
19. Spiritual promises pertain to the faithful.
20. The prophets sometimes promise things that will not be seen by the generation to whom they are promised, but by their descendants.
21. Many prophecies are no doubt fulfilled, but how and when they are fulfilled cannot always be referred to sacred or secular history.
22. When prophesying against the Jews, the prophets do not deal with the conversion of the enemies of the Jews, that the Jews might be consoled.
23. The prophets often interrupt the rhythm of their poetry for the sake of emphasis.

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- Commentarius in Genesin. Post argumentum, et distributionem partium non solum verba, et phrases S. S. e fontibus, cum collatione variarum interpretationum, expendens, ac difficultates, et quaestiones intercurrentes

cum vindiciis adversus sensus alienos, et abusus heterodoxorum, expediens, sed documenta etiam ex textu fluentia subjiciens, e praelectionibus antehac institutis, et optimis quibusque cum antiquis, tum recentioribus interpp. philologis pariter ac theologis, cum prolegomenis de scriptura sacra, ejusque imprimis sensu unico, nec non chronologia, et itinerario Geneseos. Subjuncti sunt indices locorum scripturae, autorum, rerum, ac verborum. Wittebergae: Michaelis Meyeri, 1671.

----- Malachias prophetarum V. T. novissimus, a corruptelis Hugonis Grotii vindicatus, et commentario illustratus, disputationi publicae exponetur sub praesidio viri summae reverendi, magnifici atque excellentissimi. Wittebergae: Johannis Borchardi, 1665.

----- Socinismus Profligatus, hoc est errorum Socinianorum luculenta confutatio, e S. literis propriisque ipsorum testimoniis, per universam Theologiam, trecentis quaestionibus, methodo concinna, brevitate nervosa, ita constituta, ut fides catholica cum in caeteris doctrinae caelestis capitibus, tum imprimis, qua ipsam fidei Acropolin, satisfactionem Christi, adversus eosdem invicte asseratur; haeresisque nova, et pestilentissima e Scriptis autorum indubiis bona fide producta, solide refellatur. Editio secunda locupletior et emendatior. Wittebergae: Joh. Borchard, 1668.

----- Systematis Locorum Theologicorum e Sacra potissimum Scriptura et antiquitate nec non adversariorum confessione, doctrinam praxin, et controversiarum fidei, cum veterum, tum imprimis recentiorum, tractationem luculentam exhibentis. Wittebergae: Christiani Schroedteri, 1777.

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